

CEREBUS LATTER DAYS 29



294
SEP

Endings II

I'm afraid that with the pressing need to get my cover letter out to Milo George, I made an obvious error, referring to Jules Feiffer's deriding of the letters pages in *Dissent* and *Commentary* as a "joke". I must've been having a Woody Allen flashback to *Annie Hall* and his great line that he had heard that *Dissent* and *Commentary* had merged to form a new magazine called *Dysentery*. Mr. Feiffer's comment was directed at *Commentary* and *Partisan Review* which, had they merged, would never have made such a great one-liner.

Expect more obvious errors of this kind as I slowly run out of gas.

I'm writing this 30 July and am now clocking an average 12-hour work-day. The good news is that Ger and I have both "found our groove" again recently and have been steadily making up the ground we lost over 288 and 289-290. Unless 292 was delayed going through Diamond, it should be in the stores today, which means we are back to having the cover month match the on-sale month, even if it's only for two days. 293 is at the printer and, for the first time in probably five years, I have Gerhard breathing down my neck when it comes to finishing pages. For most of the last ten years, I have had at least a one-issue "jump" on him—he would be finishing the twenty pages hanging on the wall of his studio and I would have twenty pages on the wall of my studio and I'd be racking up four or more "orphan pages" (as we called the pages not on either of the two walls) on the floor next to me. Now, he is literally taking home the six pages that I did the week before. Mathematically, if we get five pages done a week, we will just barely hit the March, 2004 deadline for getting issue 300 to the printer and probably miss getting it into the stores. If we can (God willing) stay at six pages a week, we'll be done by Christmas. See, although it *sounds* as if being done by Christmas gives us some breathing room there's virtually no margin for error because we have to leave Preney between three weeks and a month to print the book and it usually takes between two and three weeks for the book to actually make it into the stores, depending on what day of the week the shipment lands at the Diamond warehouse in Memphis.

Six-page-week, good. Done by Christmas. Five-page-week, not good. Done by end of February. Four-page-week, bad. Not go there.

This is our theme song for 2003.

Chester and I have started our "Getting *Riel*" dialogue which will (God willing) be in *Cerebus* 295-297 and I am answering virtually every Aardvark Comment letter I've got in inventory for the back of this issue and 298-300 as well as doing the annotations for the back of the *Latter Days* trade paperback which should be shipping in October.

If I've left anything out, just, please, keep it to yourself, okay? Thanks.

Six-page-week, good. Done by Christmas. Five-page week, not good. Done by end of February. Four-page week, bad. Not go there.

See you next issue.

CEREBUS

NO. 294 SEPTEMBER 2003

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters
(interior art & cover)
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist
Cover Artist
pencil & ink
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•
PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•
BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•
BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

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WINDSOR, ONTARIO

THEY THINK
CEREBIUS WANTS
TO HAVE SEX WITH
HIS OWN SON?!

CRINK
CRINK CRINK
CRINK

WELL...THEY'RE...
THEY'RE FROM LIPPER
FELDA, SIR.

SO THEY'RE
WHY. THEY'RE
WHY

GUM
GUM

THEY'RE A
LITTLE..

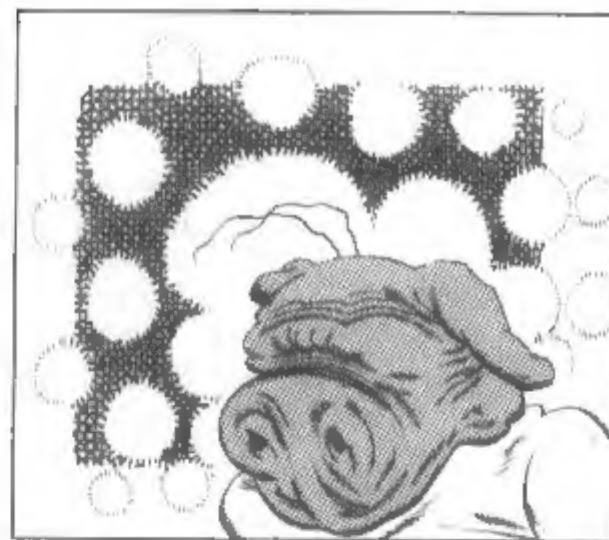
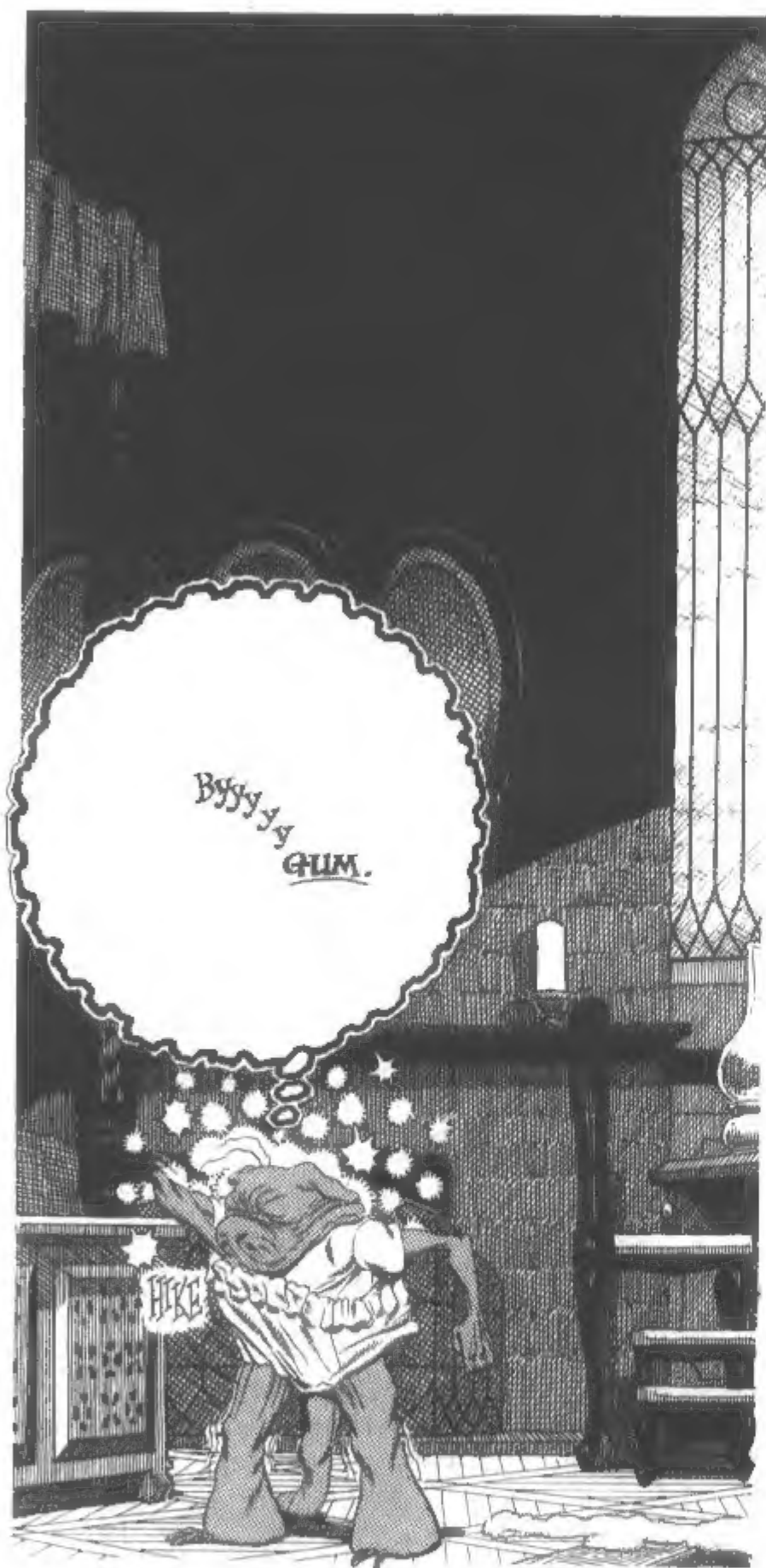
GUM
GUM

GUM
GUM

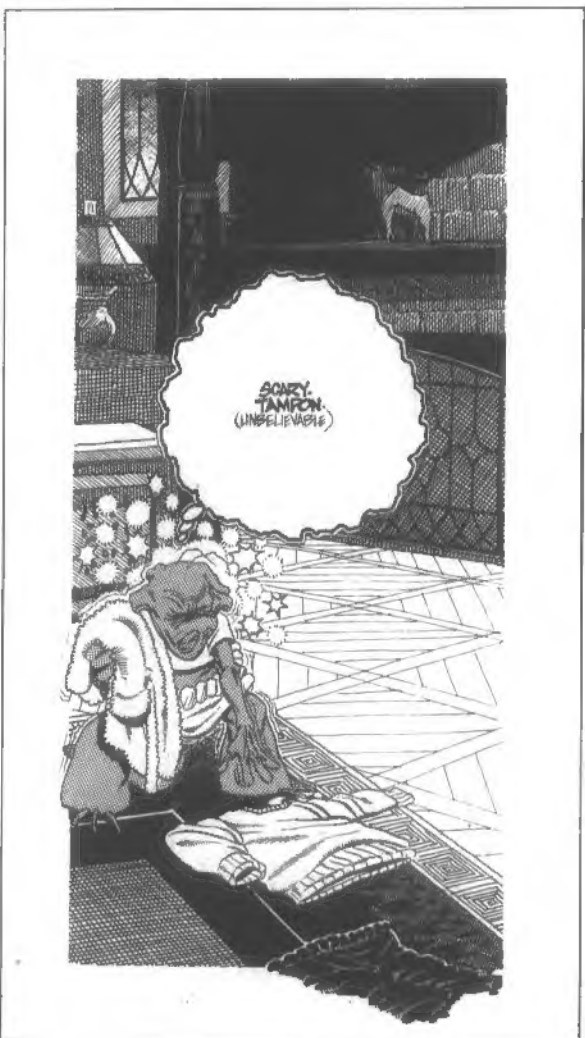
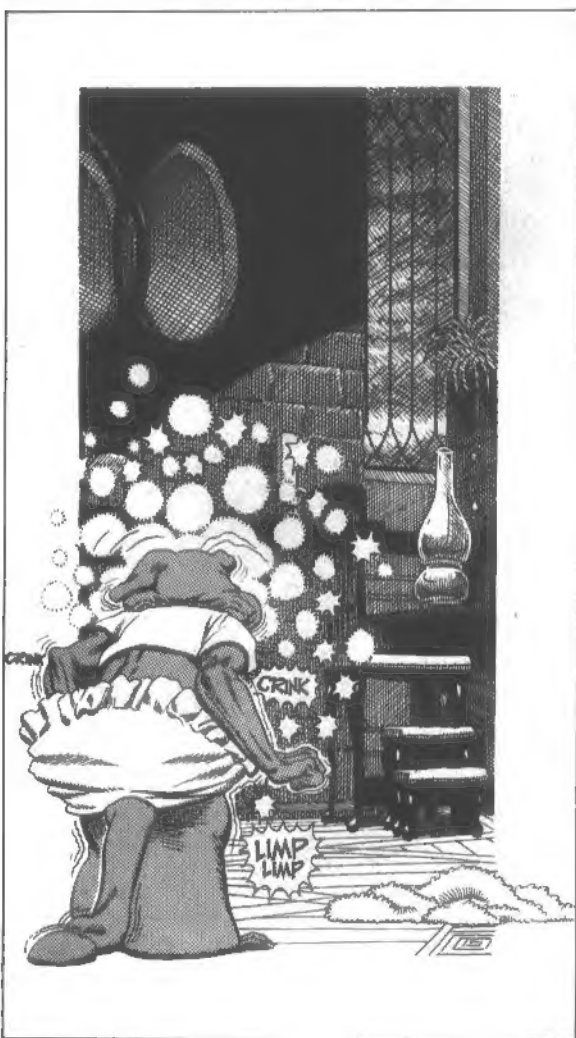
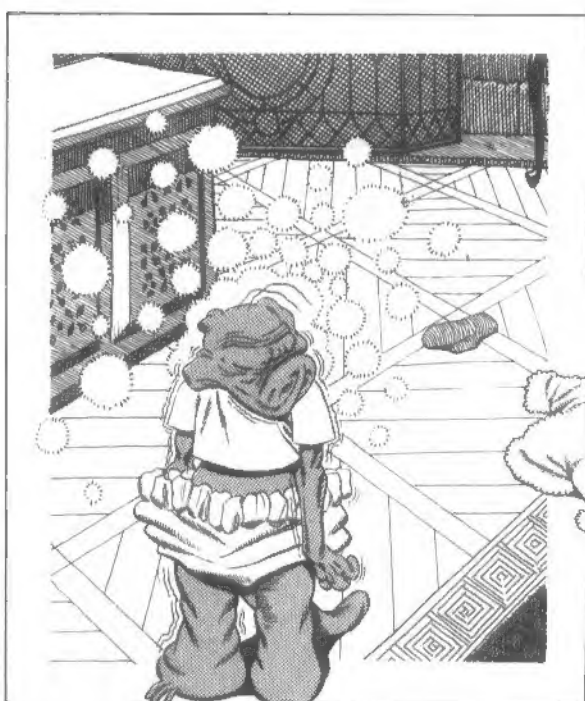
MORE
THAN A
LITTLE!

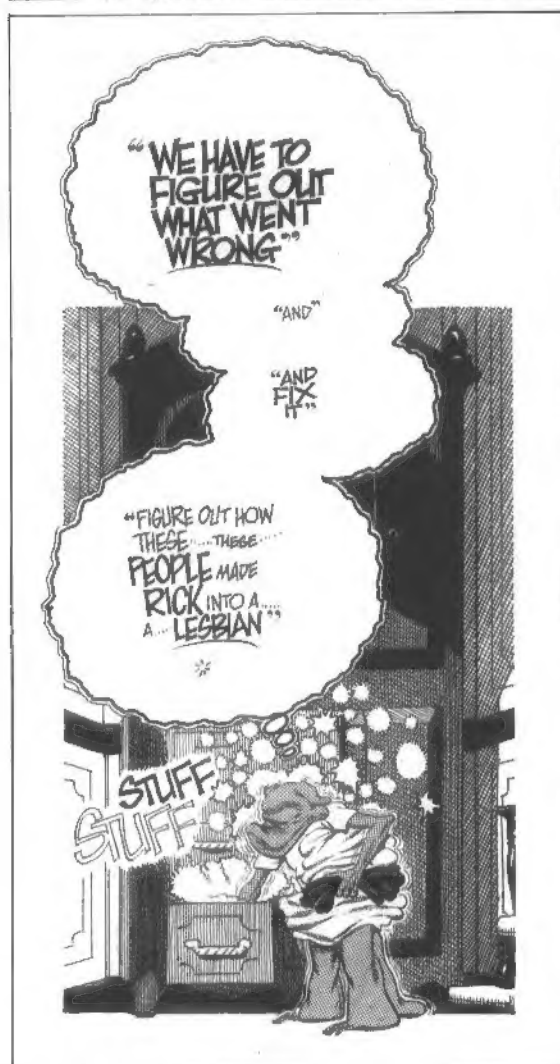
YES SIR.
WE'LL PUT
SIR.

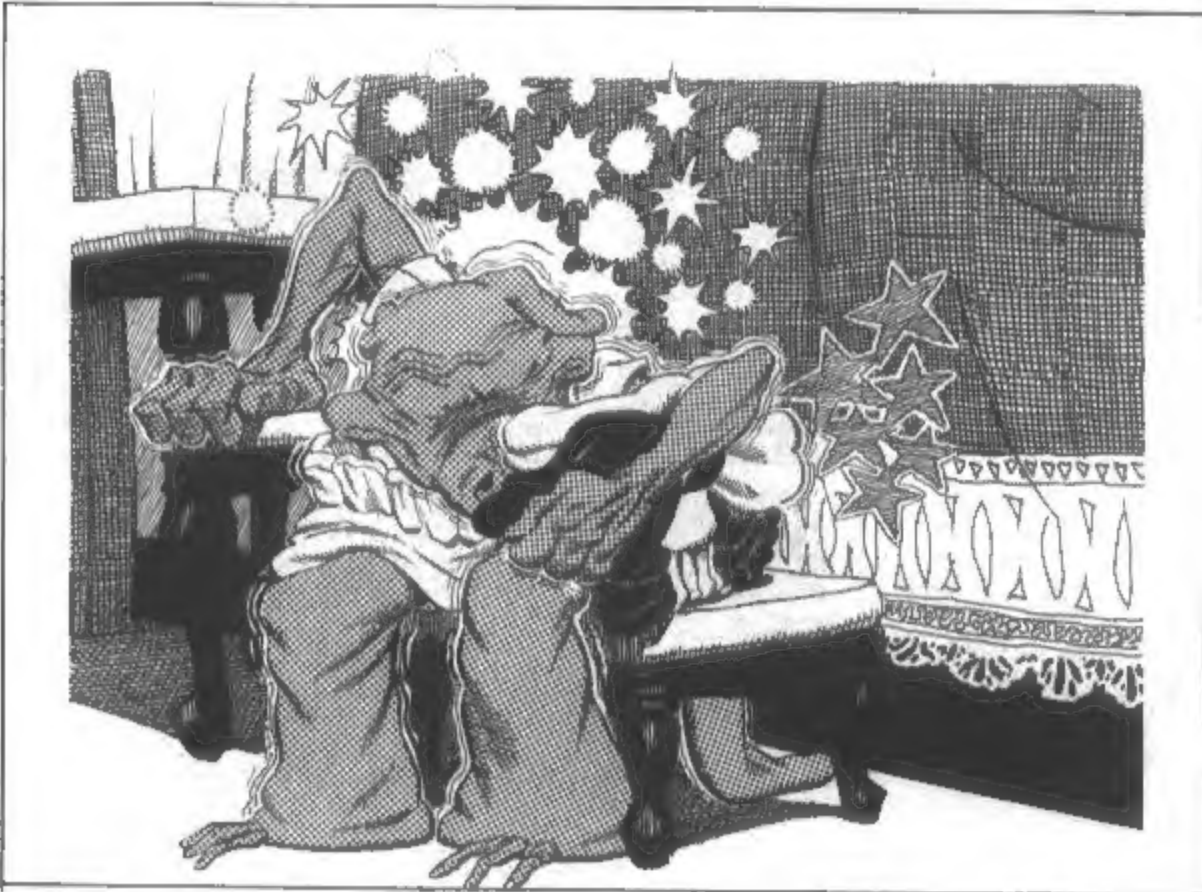
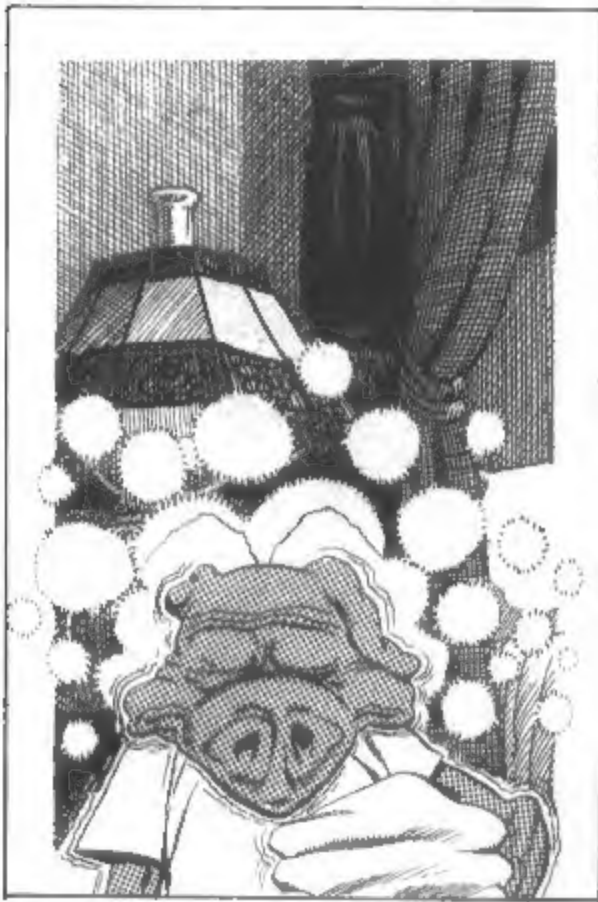
CRINK
CRINK
CRINK CRINK
CRINK

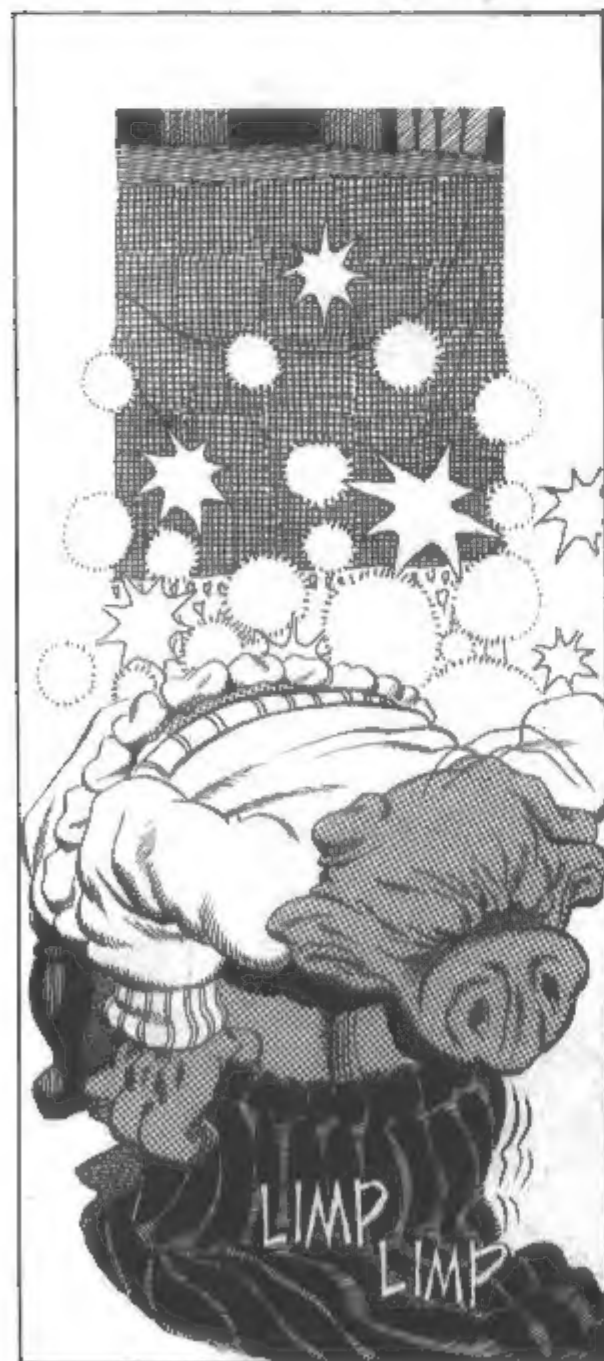
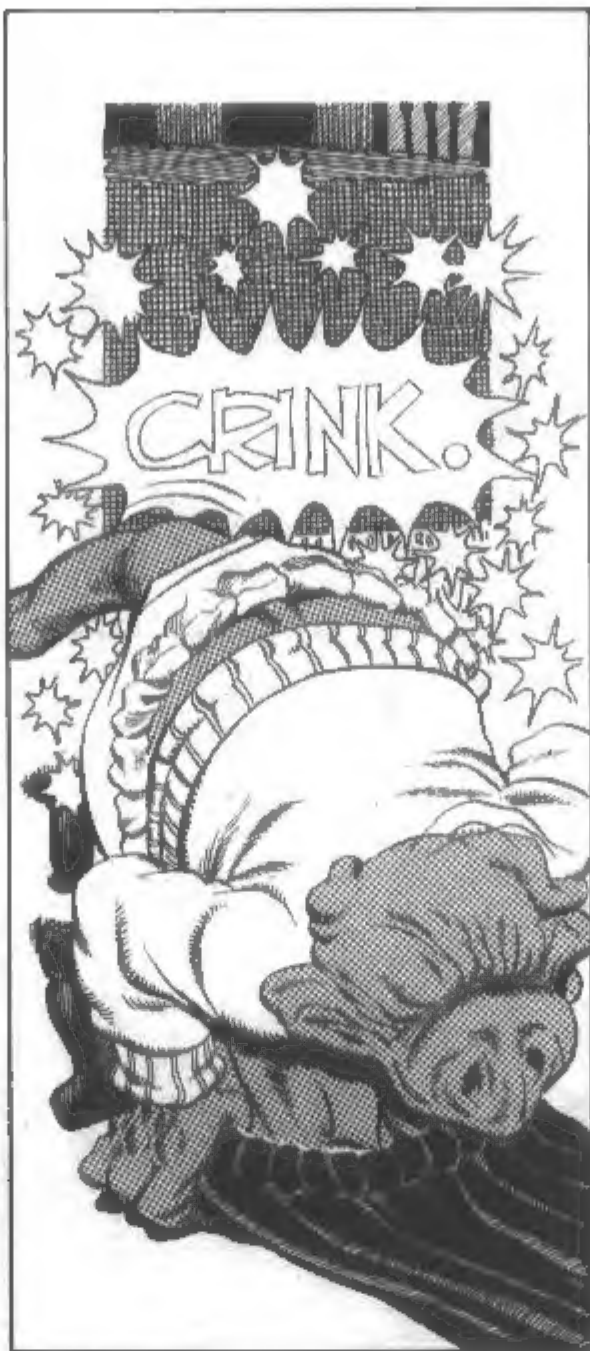


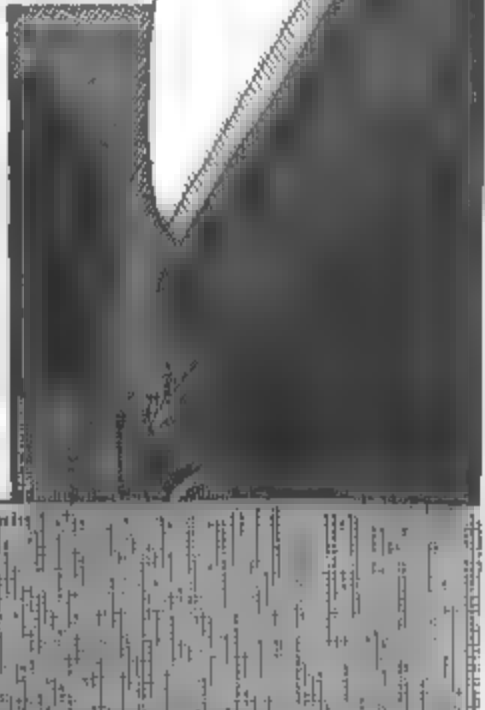
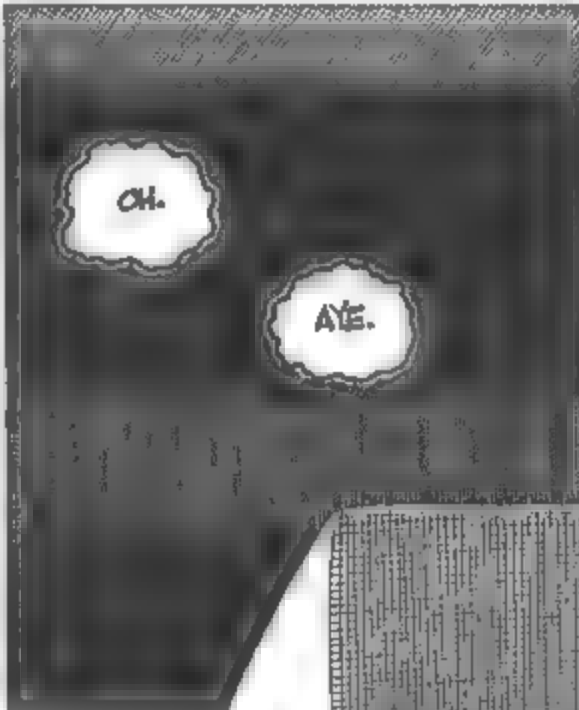
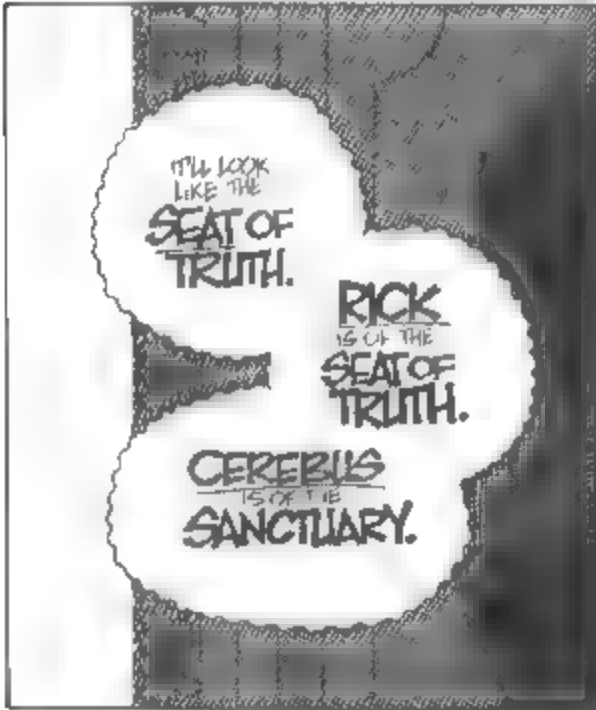
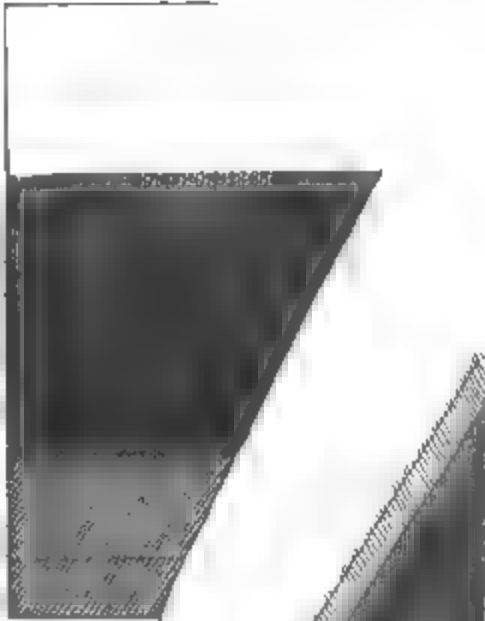
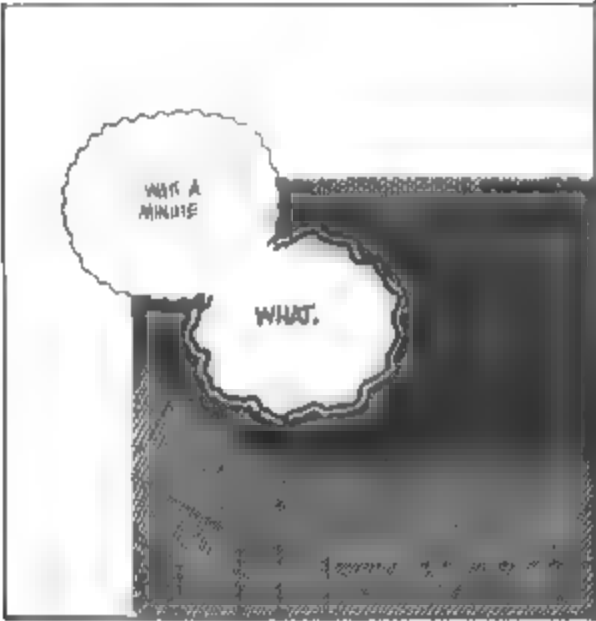


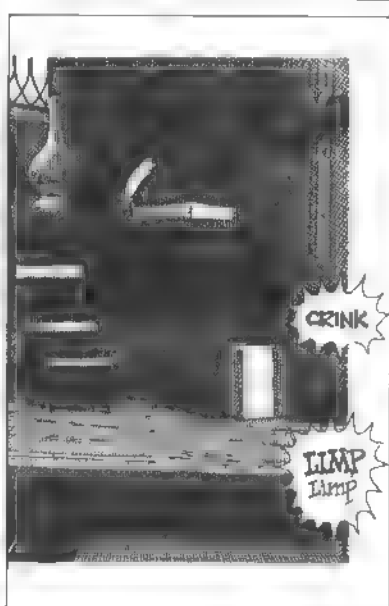
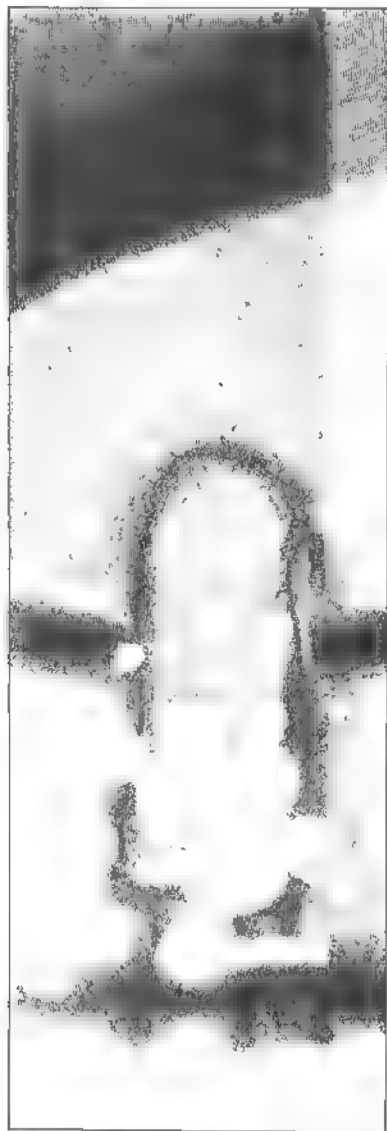


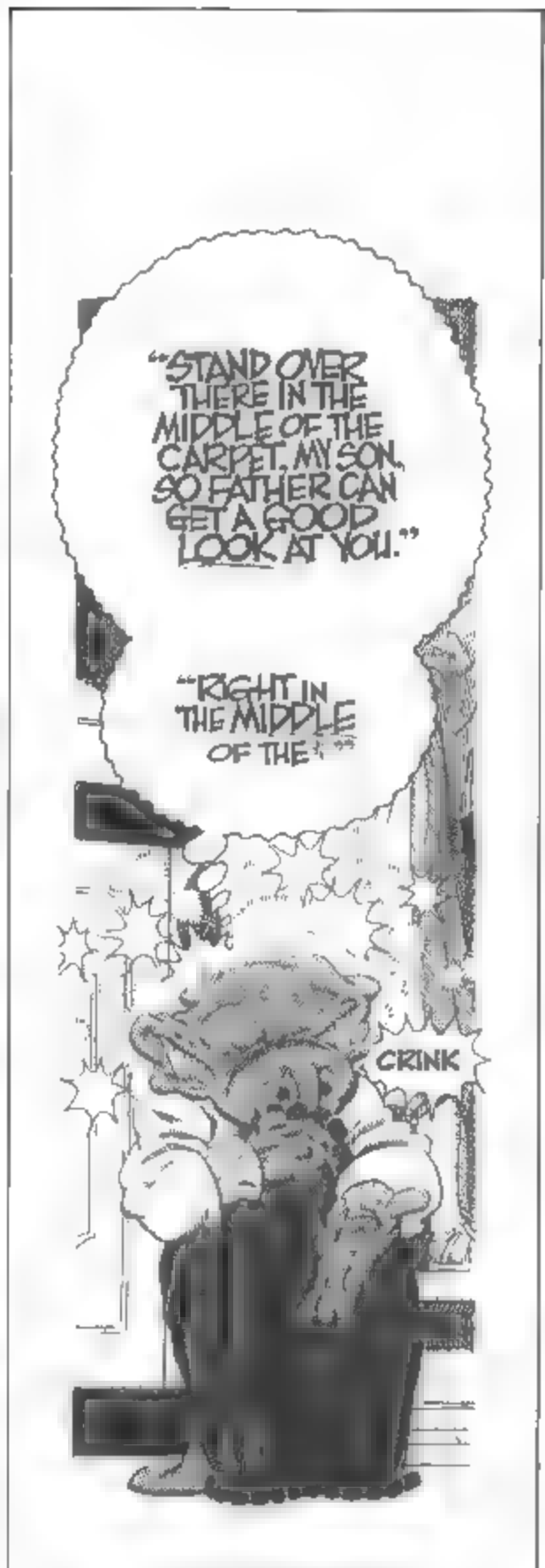


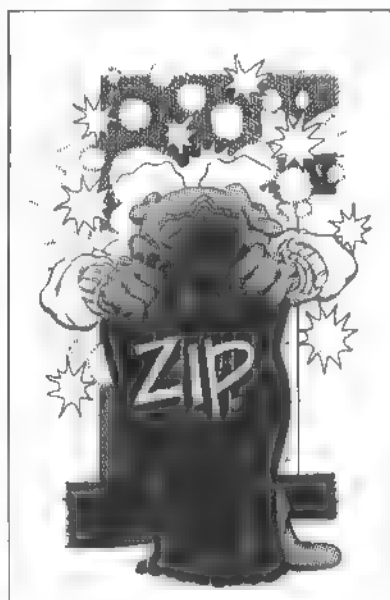
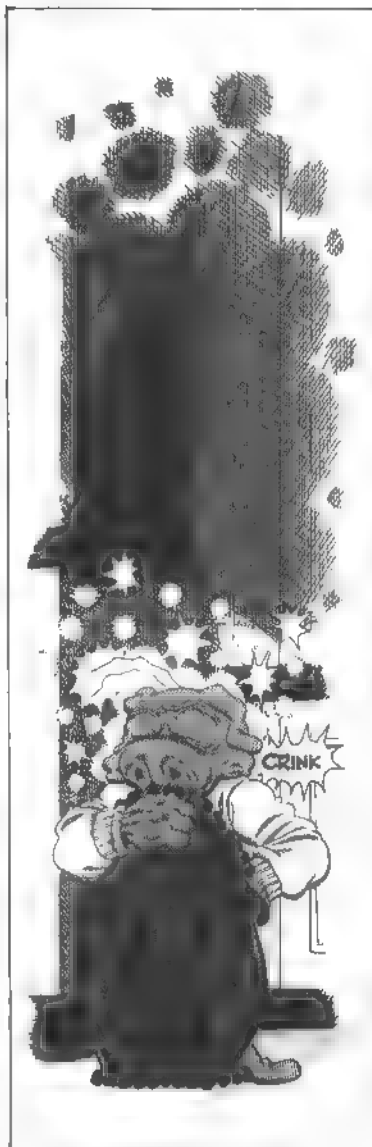


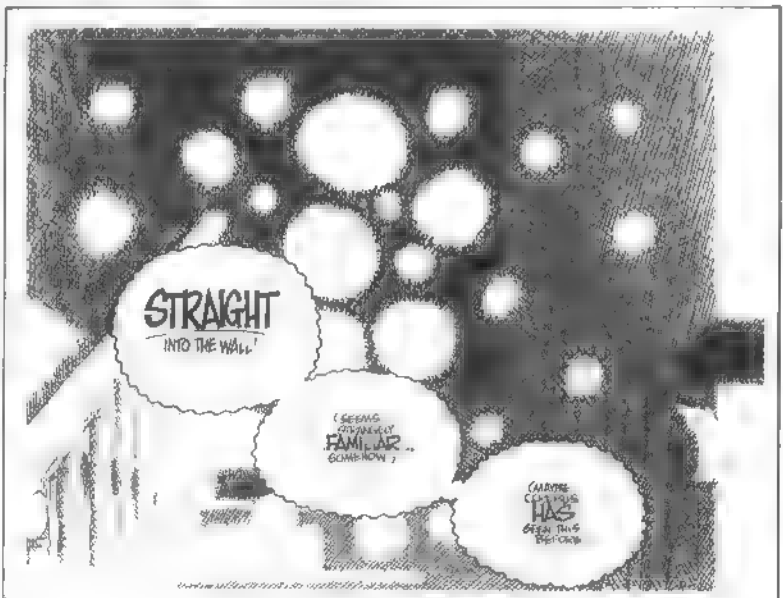
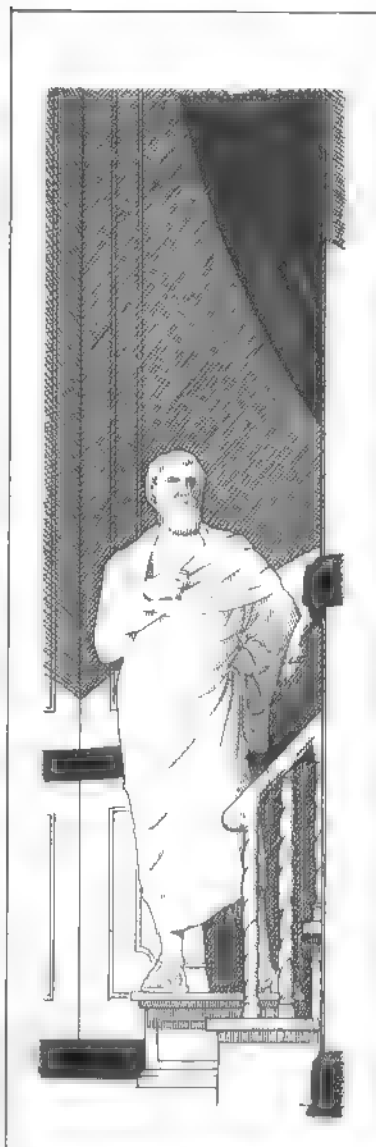
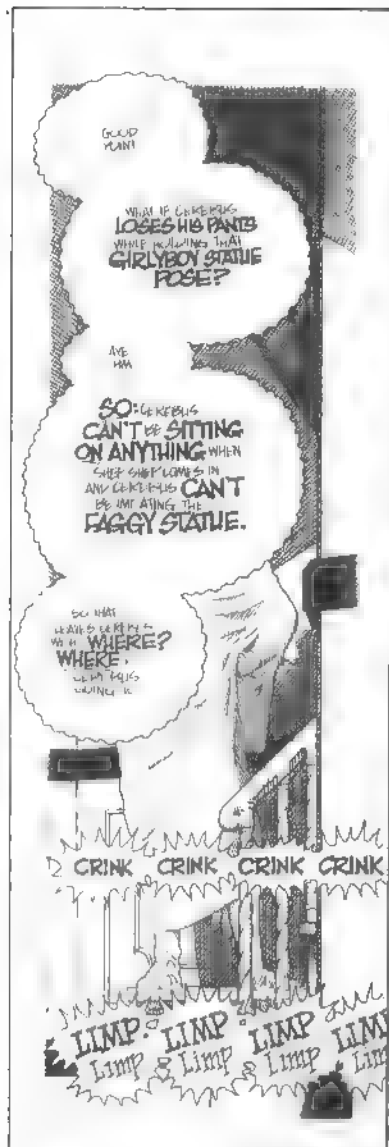


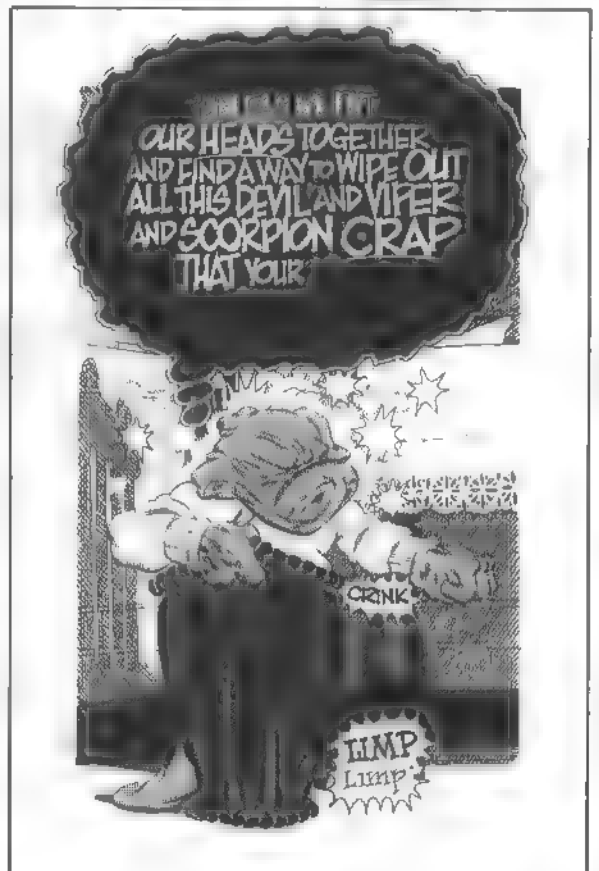
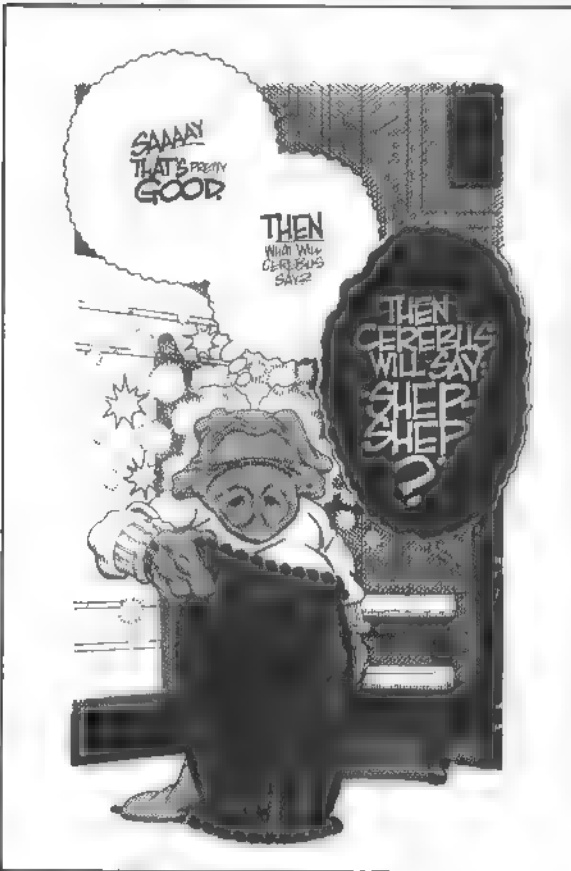
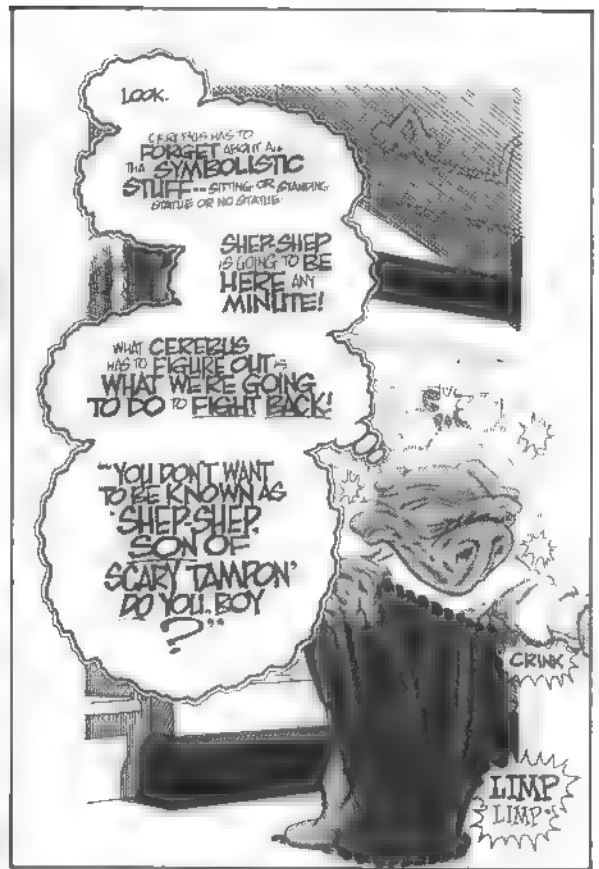


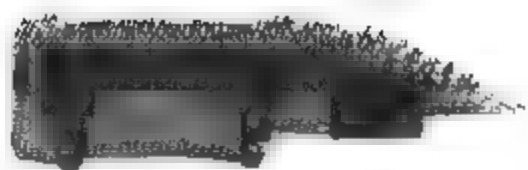












THE MUSIC FESTIVAL.

HOW COULD CEREBUS HAVE FORGOTTEN THE MUSIC FESTIVAL?

CEREBUS DOESN'T WANT TO THINK ABOUT THE MUSIC FESTIVAL.

NAY/NAY! CEREBUS HAS TO THINK ABOUT IT

WHY?

BECAUSE THAT'S WHAT SHE AND SHEPHERD ALWAYS DO THE HIGHEST TIME

STARTED WITH SHEPHERD'S FAVORITE MUSICIAN:

"THE VIPER (SOMETHING)"

"THE (SOMETHING) VIPER"

"IT'S JUST A NAME."

SHE SAYS (GIVING CEREBUS ONE OF HER LOOKS THAT ALWAYS MAKE CEREBUS THINK HE WAS THE CRAZY ONE)

JUST "THE (SOMETHING) VIPER" FIRST AND THEN... A WHOLE... FESTIVAL

RIGHT ON THE SANCTUARY GROUNDS

GRUBBY-LOOKING KIDS AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE

(ONE STEP AT A TIME THAT'S HOW SHE ALWAYS DID EVERYTHING)

"WHAT WOULD MOSHER SAY IF HE COULD SEE THIS?" CEREBUS REMEMBERED THINKING TO HIMSELF

"HE'S YOUR SON. IF YOU CAN'T BRING YOURSELF TO SAY A FEW WORDS OF INTRODUCTION"

"WHEN HE'S WORKED SO LONG AND SO HARD ON HIS FESTIVAL."

(CEREBUS IS THE CRAZY ONE.)

ONE STEP AT A TIME THAT'S HOW SHE ALWAYS DID EVERYTHING

"WHAT WOULD MOSHER SAY IF HE COULD SEE THIS?"

SHE WAITED UNTIL CEREBUS HAD CLIMBED UP ON THE STAGE

WAITED UNTIL CEREBUS WAS AT THE PODIUM

WAITED UNTIL CEREBUS STARTED TO SPEAK

THEN SHE HAD THEM RAISE THE BANNER



CEREBUS
YELLING
LOUD

(YE LING
WHAT?)

IN WAA
PLAYING RIGHT
INTO HER
HANDS

FEELING THE
LUNATIC CEREBUS
THE
CRAZY
ONE

THE BANNER WENT
THE PROBLEM. THE PROBLEM
WAS TURNING A BLIND EYE
WHEN SHE STARTED YELLING
CIRKING FOMEROY PLANTS
(OR)

WHAT IS IT THAT
ABORTION PLANT
WAS CALLING THAT WAS
THE PROBLEM.

WHY SHE WAS IN
WELLMENT
THAT SHE WAS
NEVER AS WELL
SO NASTY

MY E-TUS, DEAD OR ALIVE

CRAZINESS!
SPOTS SPOTS
BEATING
ON THOSE

'ISIC FESTIVAL '32

CEBRATE MONOMANIA!

PROBINGLY
SHE'S
MUSIC PROBLEM

DIRTY
KIDS

CEREBUS WENT
HIS MIND
DON'T
REACT. NEVER
ALL SHE WANTS
IS A
REACTION SO DON'T
GIVE IT TO HER.

YELLING
AND
YELLING

AND YELLING AND
YELLING.
SO
WON

ABORTION BECAME
RIGHT

BECAUSE
CEREBUS
LOST HIS
TEAMER

ABORTION
BECAME
RIGHT

SHEP-SHEP
YELLING
CEREBUS
YELLING

TRYING TO
OBTAIN TO
SHEP-SHEP
ANYK

ABORTION BECAME
RIGHT. BECAUSE A
BLIND OF GILBERT
LOOKING KIDS
GOT THE E HEADS
BROKEN

BECAUSE
CEREBUS
RUINED HIS
SON'S MUSIC
FESTIVAL

WHAT'S HER
NAME
"ABOVE
IT ALL"

SHE
SITTING
IN THAT CHAIR
OVER THERE
SMILING.

(WHAT IS HER
NAME AGAIN? LUCKY
WE OPEN ALL THE
"NEW JOANNE"
WIKI SOMETHING)

(LET'S NOT
MATTER)

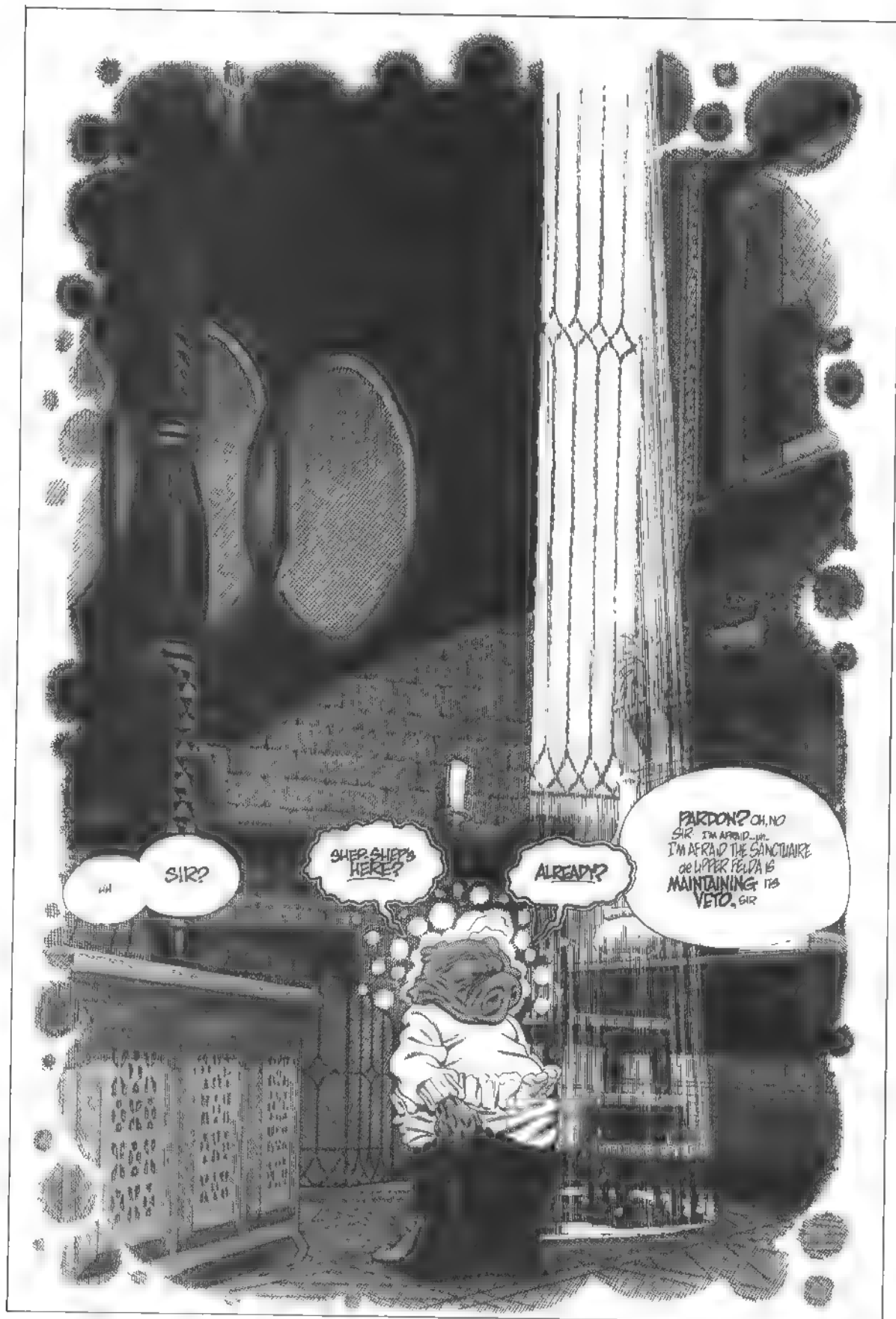
WHAT
MATTERS
IN CASE SHE
IS COMING
BACK

(AAGAH
(AYE)
AAGAH)

ONLY
THIS TIME
WE'RE GOING
TO PUT OUR
HEADS
TOGETHER
AND

SIR?



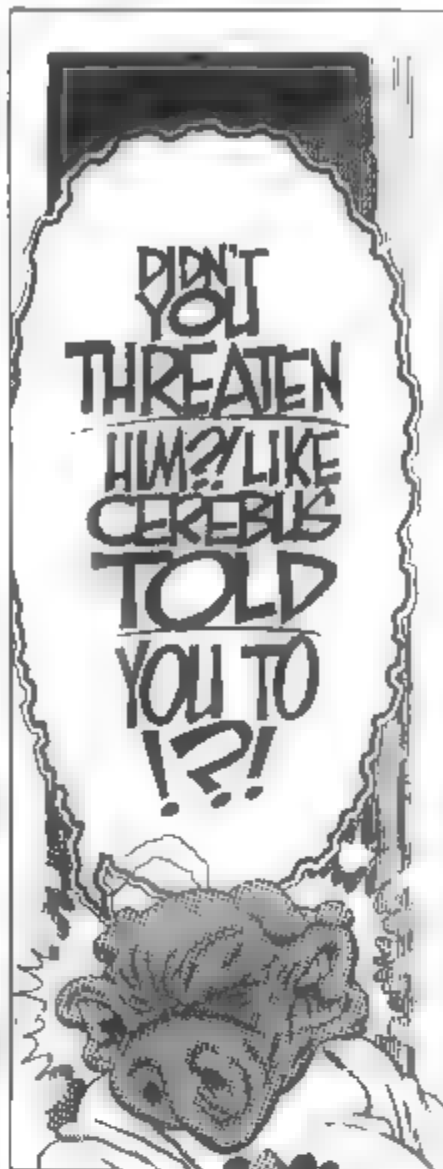


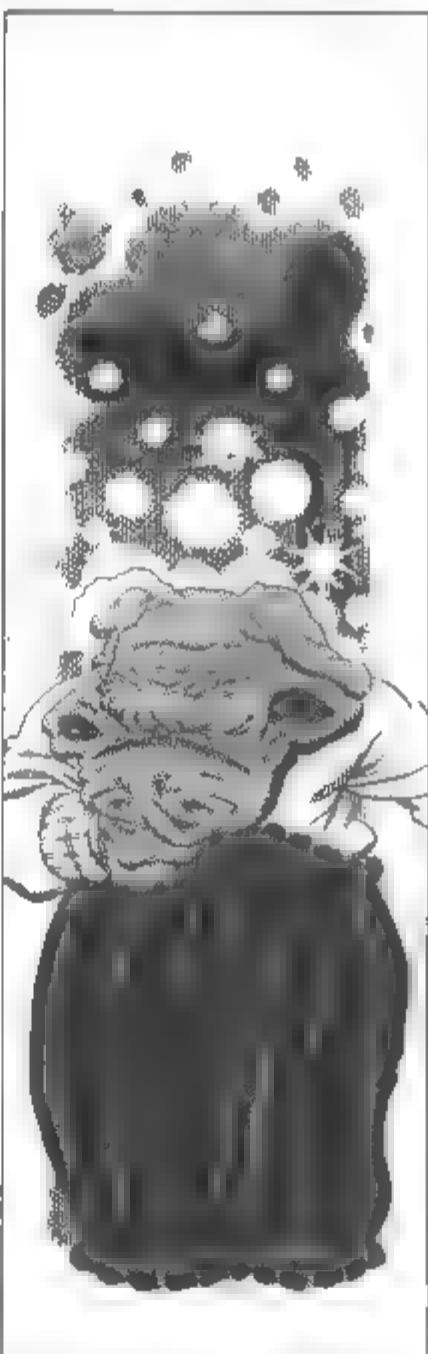
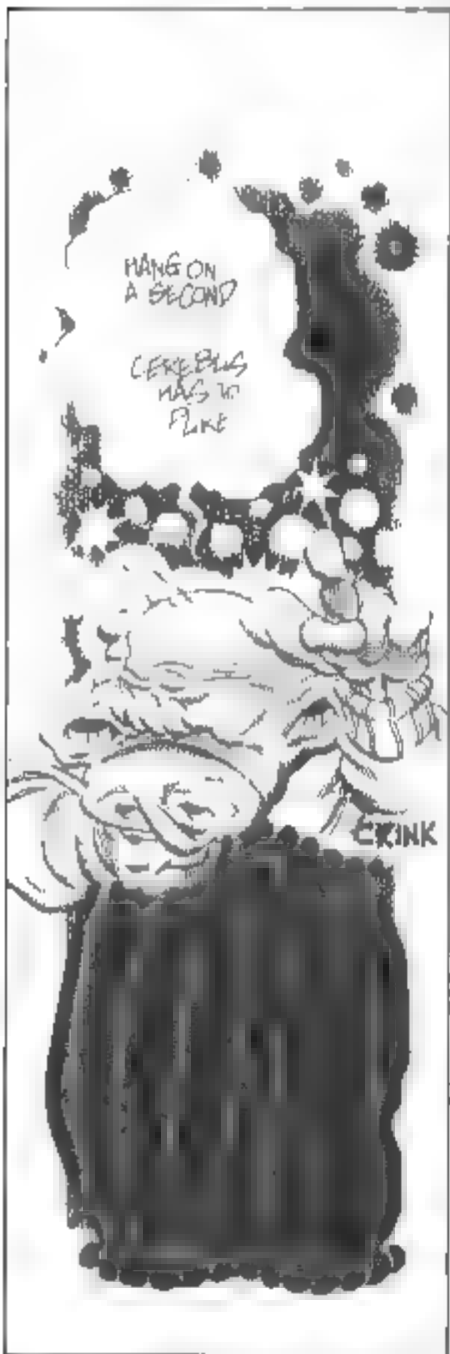
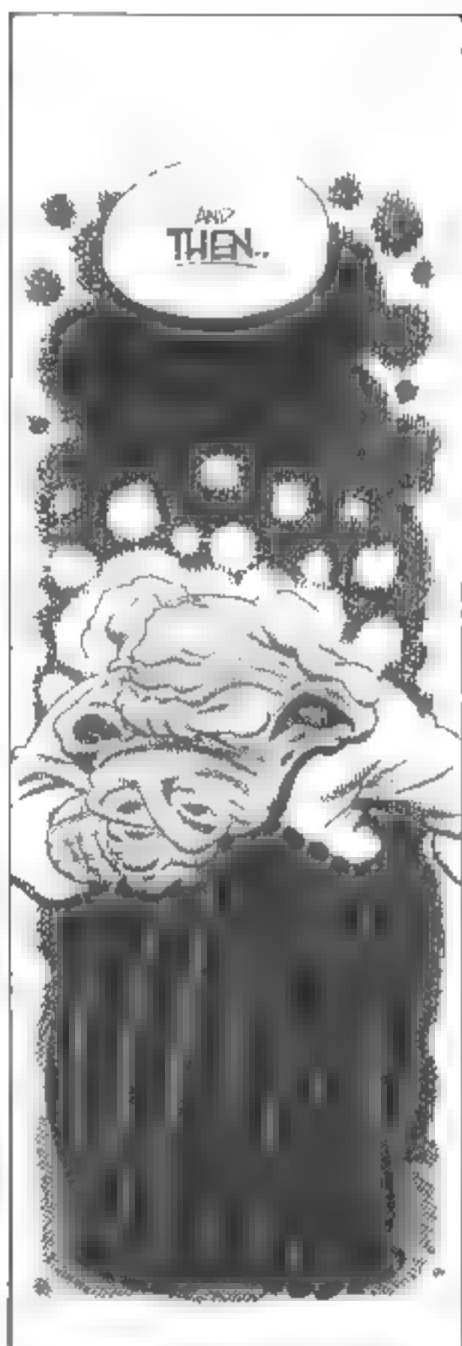
SIR?

SHEP SHEP'S
HERE?

ALREADY?

PARDON? OH, NO
SIR. I'M AFRAID...
I'M AFRAID THE SANCTUARY
OF UPPER FELDA IS
MAINTAINING ITS
VETO, SIR





Aardvark Comment

One of the suras from the Koran which I was hoping to run across in time to include in the "Partial Bibliography" in Cerebus 289-290 finally turned up during my regular Sunday night scripture readings July 20, sura 84, "The Splitting Asunder":

When the heaven shall have split asunder
And duteously obeyed its Lord,
And when earth shall have been stretched out,
And shall have cast forth what was in her and
become empty,
And duteously obeyed its Lord,
Then verily, O man, who desirest to reach thy Lord,
shalt thou meet Him
And he into whose right hand his book shall be
given,
Shall be reckoned with an easy reckoning,
And shall turn, rejoicing, to his kindred.
But he whose book shall be given him behind his
back
Shall invoke destruction:
But in the Fire shall he burn,
For that he lived joyously among his kindred,
Without a thought that he should return.
Yea, but his Lord beheld him.
It needs not therefore that I swear by the sunset red-
ness,
And by the night and its gatherings,
And by the moon what at her full,
That from state to state shall ye be surely carried
onward.
What then hath come to them that they believe not?
And that when the Koran is recited to them they
adore not?
Yea, the unbelievers treat it as a lie
But God knoweth their secret hatreds:
Let their only tidings be those of painful punish-
ment;
Save to those who believe and do the things that be
right. An unfailing recompense shall be theirs.

* * * * *

22 January 2003

Dear Dave,

Just wanted to drop a line thanking you for your donation to the Pilots' Relief Fund in Illinois, and for your unflinching support of the United States over the past year and a half

I think I'm very safe in assuming that I am the only *Cerebus* reader who actually knows Harry Schmidt and Bill Umbaugh [sic]. I had the opportunity to work with

both of them during a training and flight test exercise a couple of years ago (I am a civilian aerospace engineer), and I found them to be not just outstanding pilots, but also among the best people you'd ever care to meet (as are the overwhelming majority of military members). I am ashamed beyond words to see them put on trial for political reasons by the country that they risked their lives to defend

I should note that I've also had the pleasure of working with several RCAF fighter pilots during my career, and they too were wholly admirable individuals, both in and out of the cockpit. To their great credit, considering the severe lack of resources and institutional disdain imposed upon them by the current Canadian government, the officers and airmen of the RCAF have maintained a level of excellence in their skills and professionalism that is second to none in the world

I can't begin to tell you how much I have appreciated your own words in "Islam, My Islam" and "Why Canada Slept," particularly the opening section of "Islam," which was probably the best and most cogent overview of the threat posed by Islamofascism—and the moral imperative to repel it—that I've read during this entire period. In the event that you ever tire of living under the rule of the Liberal party, Dave, I do hope you'll consider relocating to the south. I for one would be immensely proud to call you my countryman.

Sincerely,
Will Collier
861 Highview Drive
Smyrna, GA 30082

Well, thank you, Mr. Collier. It's a most tempting offer but, as I've written elsewhere, I think God put me in this country and under Liberal party rule for a reason. Either, at the low end, to be just another of the many living demonstrations of the way Liberal "shunning" works (so as to be part of the cumulative undermining of the Liberal self-delusion of inclusiveness and tolerance) or, at the high end, to possibly do a stretch in jail on a "hate literature" conviction for not being a feminist. If the latter case, I would seriously consider relocating to the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave once I've "done my time."

Thank you again.

* * * * *

Gerhard

There I was, thoroughly enjoying Issue #279, page

7,15/02

7, when again I saw those *magnificent* trees in panel 2. By panel 5 I took out my magnifier and enjoyed (pondered, really) the mystery of what seems indescipt (sic? "not specific" that is) up close but 17 inches back appears like trees silhouetted against a bright sky as light fades. I *then* remembered what you suggested at the Ohio SPACE convention. *Panel 9*—the very next one to capture my attention—contained the exact phrase, "HI ROBERT"

Thank you

That's all I can say as a fan of all this great line work you do. It's a marvel to witness this much attention to detail and it's a great compliment to find my name permanently referred to in this great body of work that you and Dave Sim have devoted yourselves to all these years.

Robert Gavila
20-23 43 Street
Astoria, NY 11105-1225

Robert is a long-time Cerebus fan. He was enthusing to Gerhard at Space 2002 about the fine line-work that Gerhard does and how he enjoys looking at the detail through a magnifying lens (a "10X thread-counter," he mentions in another letter, dated April 6, 2001). Ger told him he would surprise him by lettering "Hi Robert" in one of the backgrounds. I spotted the "Hi Robert" when the pages were on the wall and had no idea what it was doing there until Robert's letter came in.

I'd apologize to Robert for the heated discussion I had with his lovely wife, Maria, at Damon's restaurant after Space 2003, but I think he enjoyed it at least as much as I did, judging by the look on his face.

* * * * *

Hi, Dave

Hope 2002 is treating you and Gerhard well so far (Hi, Gerhard).

On Tuesday, I did an interview with the lead singer of a rock band called Iron Maiden. You might not be familiar with them (They play heavy metal), but we got to talking about Todd McFarlane, because McFarlane Toys is releasing action figures of Iron Maiden's mascot, a zombified, Evil Ernie-lookalike called Eddie [Actually, I think it's fair to say Eddie was the Evil Ernie prototype (the Ur-Ernie?) 'cause he first appeared on record covers years before Chaos Comics ever came along].

When he mentioned hanging out with Todd, I grabbed my copy of *Cerebus* issue #274 and quoted the, "Try the craziest thing we can think up first..." segment to him. After a moment's pause, he said, "Yeah, that sounds about right."

Having really enjoyed the appendices you've done for the last few books, I was wondering, did you ever consider going back and doing notes for the earlier volumes, like *High Society* and *Church & State*? It would

be really interesting to find out which source materials went into the creation of each storyline. Heck, I know I'd buy the books again in expanded versions ("Now, *Melmoth* has a swollen appendix!").

My own research to find out more about the subjects of your books led me to a biography of Oscar Wilde by Frank Harris (In case you don't already have it, it's a paperback published by Dell, 1960). What struck me the most were the passages pertaining to the trial, imprisonment, and *Melmoth*-era Wilde

Harris argued—and this sounds about right to me—that prison didn't break Wilde so much as his refusal to stay the Hell away from Alfred Douglas once he served his term in jail. He mentions that "The Ballad of Reading Gaol," "is the highest height Oscar Wilde ever reached, and alas! he only trod the summit for a moment." Having been separated from his vices, Wilde was finally able to get back to what he was best at: Writing.

"This was the moment when his soul was at stake between good and evil... Oscar himself told me afterwards, that he had come out of prison determined not to go back to Alfred Douglas and the old life... It was at the instigation of Lord Alfred Douglas that Oscar began the insane action against Lord Queensberry, in which he put to hazard his success, his position, his good name and liberty, and lost them all. Two years later, at the same tempting, he committed soul-suicide

"He was not only better in health than he had ever been; but he was talking and writing better than ever before and full of literary projects which would certainly have given him money and position and a measure of happiness besides increasing his reputation. From the moment he went to Naples he was lost, and he knew it himself; he never afterwards wrote anything. As he used to say, he could never afterwards face his own soul."

Anyway, if you have the inclination to go back and write about the creation of your earlier books in minute, scholar-squirrel detail, please do so.

Finally, I can't recall if you said you'd given up following hockey games altogether, or just stopped watching them on TV, but this was part of an e-mail I got from a friend:

I went to the NY Rangers ice hockey game at Madison Square Garden the other night. The game itself was notable only for its tie score, incredible considering that the mighty Rangers were playing the oft-not mentioned Columbus Blue Jackets.

I did manage to have myself a wonderful exchange in the men's room (where else?) with a fan in between the 2nd and 3rd period. He must have weighed 350 lbs. and had a huge, oversized Messier #11 Ranger home jersey. He was urinating while swaying back and forth when he belched out, "Where the hell is Columbus, anyway?"

I was next to him and responded, "It's in Ohio." Then he paused (still swaying) and asked, "Then what the hell is a Blue Jacket?" (the team name). I said that I didn't know, was wondering about that myself, when the guy on the other side of our drunken friend (love that men's room etiquette) said, in a very know-it-all tone,

"It's a Civil War reference." Well, this threw us both for a loop, especially the drunken Messier guy, who asked, loudly, "Were they on our side at least?"

Then another man from a urinal clear across the room joined in the discussion. "Actually", he said, "the Blue Jackets were worn by Sherman's men." "Who?" asked the fat man. Then another voice. "Wasn't Ohio a territory back then?" And off we went, discussing Civil War history at the urinals in the men's room in the Garden in between periods at a Rangers game.

Ah, New York.

Be sure to mention that one when you get to Space 2002. And if you find any way to use the phrase "clawed flowers" in *Cerebus* at some point between now and #300, I'll be happy for life.

All the best,
Claude Flowers
602 N. Prospect Ave.
Kent, Washington
98031-4656
USA

Actually, Claude, according to my Funk & Wagnall's, "blue jacket" is a term dating from the early 1800's referring to an enlisted man in the navy: a sailor, although I believe that there is a Civil War context as well

I mentioned this to Space organizer, Bob Corby, when he picked me up at the airport. He found it all very interesting and then told me the Columbus Blue Jackets were named for their major corporate sponsor, Nationwide Insurance—they play their home games at Nationwide Arena (which, surprisingly enough, actually contains one of the better continental cuisine restaurants I've been to) in what is now known as the "Arena District." The name comes from the fact that Nationwide Insurance agents wear blue jackets.

I think we drove for four or five miles before I could think of anything else to say.

1 April 2002

Dear Dave,

Has anyone told you yet that "tembo" is Swahili for elephant?

Paul Gadzikowski
1419 Thornberry
Louisville, Ky
40215

No, Paul. So far, you're the first and only. Now I want all of you to go get your scissors and your rubber cement, cut out Paul's letter, flip to page 720 in the Form & Void trade paperback and stick it over my note for "...I heard tembo chewing and chewing..."

Dear Dave,

Your anecdote about good old Oscar telling people that his hair perm made him resemble the bust of Nero reminded me of another great Wilde story which I thought you might dig if you haven't heard it before. Apparently Wilde was doing the "lecture circuit thing" in the States and found the reception of the New York crowd to be insufficiently adoring. Flying into an Oscar Wilde-like tantrum, he denounced them all as Philistines. Whereupon some American with a quick wit and flair for extending metaphor shouted back, "Yeah, and you're slaying us with the jawbone of an ass!"

Wilde's response is not recorded.

Yours truly
James B. Toner

Even if it's apocryphal, it's a hell of a story James. Thanks for sending it in. (The reference, by the way, is to Samson—of Samson and Delilah infamy—and can be found in Judges 15:15-17).

Dear Dave,

I was about to write you a letter in some kind of half-assed attempt to make sense of the reaction to *Tangents* [sic] (my knowledge of which consist entirely of what I've waded through at COMICON.com and the *Comics Journal* website), when I got to Sky Woodruff's letter in *Cerebus* #222 and your follow-up reply in the same issue. I am realizing that once again, there's really not much to recommend in dredging it all up.

So after re-reading *Mothers & Daughters* in its entirety, I'd been going over the individual phonebook introductions and what was left of my collection of single issues (long story), when I came to the Moore/Sim dialogue. The points concerning the preference for co-existing yet opposing belief systems without need of resorting to the torch, mobbing and stake-burning of one's ideological nemeses were well made. It's been an unfortunate recurrence in history that Authority often believes the problem with thinking people is that they are dangerously susceptible to being reasoned with, and thus possibly converted to the hated "other" side. Better to put the agitators to the sword before they muddy the waters, or so goes the logic.

I've been giving a great deal of thought to this story of yours as of late. I essentially read the *Mothers & Daughters* volumes (quite unintentionally) in reverse order, and so resisted the urge to continue back to the beginning of the series, where terrible analogies might have overwhelmed me with the notion that the Cirinists were actually receding from prominence; pious men who would heal wounds with ritual blades and fascinat-

ing strips of paper which accumulate in value and are inexplicably exchanged for (transmuted into?) worthless gold (which no one seems to be able to get rid of quickly enough) uncoiling in their wake. The vestigial associations between the slivers of story housed in individual issues and their *Aardvark Comment* counterparts winding an analogous, residual trail through the clumps of traumatized grey matter dangling loose in my cranium. I resisted the urge

Instead, I looked over #266 again and started to mentally compose my "go figure" letter on *Tangents* [sic] reactions, which also ended up being doomed to reluctant abandonment. A less perceptive person might ignore such obviously symbolic false starts and continue on their present course despite increasingly numerous signs and warnings. Not so sure I'm that much different, in spite of my elaborately orchestrated self-regulatory measures.

I'm writing now, after almost ten years of silent monthly reflection, to relate a few salient points and ask a couple of spurious questions. They include

1.) Under a considerable amount of duress (self-inflicted, I'm afraid), I begrudgingly surrendered my entire collection of *Cerebus* back issues (from #41 or so up, plus the odd earlier issue and one-shot special [including *AV-3D*]) to the redemption of my own sadly lacking moral character. You know, I used an entire longbox of AV publications to fulfill a karmic debt. Shades of the 'literature test' you once explained in *Aardvark Comment* ("If the book is heavy enough to stun a burglar..."). I owed money (and then some), and I paid it off with *Cerebus*. Being the only real comic book I still collect in any meaningful sense, it was somewhat difficult to wisk them out the door, knowingly ejecting a sizeable component of my comics reference library in the process. Then, a year and change later, the idiot tried to give them back to me! He diplomatically abandoned them at a shop we both frequent, leaving instructions to turn them over to me when next I came in. Not to be outwitted by the rightful legal possessor of my perfectly legitimate ethical overdraft, I in turn donated the entire collection to a mutual friend (co-owner of the shop in question, and in all honesty much more my friend than his passing acquaintance), who to this day may or may not have even attempted to read the damn things yet. Playing hot potato with two hundred issues of *Cerebus* did not quickly become a favorite sport. My internal jury has yet to render a verdict on whether or not I'll be allowed to restock my current meager holdings—stretching back only to the beginning of *Going Home*—sating the desire to cross-reference the actual contents of late 1980's *Aardvark Comment* with what remains in the now time-altered vaults of my conscious memory. I only mention the incident here in the small hope that the affair's preservation in posterity will serve as a signpost for me to remember lessons learned. Using the book in this manner is fitting since the artifact of the comic book in its many other forms (i.e., non-*Cerebus*) has become considerably less precious to me in my old age, *Eddie Campbell's Bacchus* and *Promethea* to be excluded as pre-imminent excep-

tions. This has torn from me the last panacea of Comic Book As Object. Firmly sacrificing these collectibles being the price of actions entered into with full knowledge. I guess what I'm saying is that *Cerebus* has contributed to at least my own decisive ethical development. Perhaps not the sort of praise you're accustomed to receiving, but it is said that Utility is the better part of Valor, and who am I to argue with my own badly mangled corruption of famous mens' words?

2.) Explaining anything is useless. Wilde was onto something with his "When the critics disagree, the Artist is in accord with himself" How this squares with governing the Republic is echoed by the novel invention of the anonymous ballot. Voters at the polls aren't required to qualify their choices (at least not yet), and such is as it should be. The artistic voice selects raw materials in the same manner as a constituent half-hazardly aiming for pregnant chads. "And it harm none...", enlightened self-interest takes its rightful place subservient to internal dialogue. It's important to make good choices, or at least ones you can live with. Reconciling your choices with the distinctive sensibilities of others isn't strictly desirable or even possible most of the time. This isn't such a sad fact. Give and take doesn't balance when the other end won't let go, and there's no reason to push anyone off the merry-go-round because they happen to be swinging out while you happen to be swinging in. There is a balance which overshadows individual acts and contains the entirety of human endeavor. Many attribute the label 'God' to this awareness and then go about their business in ignoring its wisdom.

3.) Senteus Po. Wisdom or folly? Much of what was said in *Reads* seemed to point directly to the speech he gives Cirin, Cerebus and Astoria in the throne room. While he espouses non-interference and placid observation, here he stands, truly altering the (arguably) most significant event to take place in his lifetime with these carefully constructed sentences. On the one hand, his intervention contradicts its own purpose, but flip the coin over and one realizes that without this intervention, someone might well have been sentenced to death in the name of Truth. Again. There is something to be said for abandoning destructive behavior, even if that means a small breach in the comfortable routine. At the very least, his actions seem to have freed Cerebus of many distracting and meddlesome influences (though this alone doesn't explain or excuse his own tampering with Cerebus's mind, which may well have been taking place even before Astoria and Cirin came on the scene. Just how long has Po been 'watching over' him, anyway?)

4.) If Senteus Po has spent his entire life alone in a room, playing chess, how do Cirin and Astoria recognize him when he suddenly materializes in the throne room, telling them what's what? Wouldn't they be somewhat shocked to be confronted with another (sperm producing!) male aardvark? Instead, Cirin seems most impatient with this latest tete-nipping distraction elbowing in and disrupting her assured ascension. Or have they communicated telepathically 'off panel'? How aware are they of his continuous meddling in Cerebus's life?

5.) While 'poit' may not be your greatest contribution to comics literature, it has to at least rank somewhere near the top in the Great List Of Quality Innovations In Comic Book Sound Effects. The disappearance of life-giving oxygen into a cold, hard vacuum has seldom been depicted with greater flair, and certainly never so well with only two vowels and a couple of consonants. Unfortunately, it is much too soon to appropriate the effect wholesale into the mass of comic book hack work. Further study of the phenomenon is recommended and required.

6.) Thank you for Guys.

Inevitably (there's that word again), I'm including in this package some examples of what I've been up to since ending the free zine I used to force on the public, and deciding Egypt wasn't where I wanted to go (yet) with my storks. The 'real' comic is an example of the one thousand-some-odd copies of the issue that remain boxed in my upstairs art room. I'm about half way through a short story right now (issues #7-10; the mini-comics), which centers around an identity crisis focused through the character's connection to a particular comics narrative. The half-legal (sized) booklet is one of those things that just... happens. I'm sure you can relate (or not, feel free to hold it with only the tips of your fingers, disposing of the wretched thing if it lashes out at you).

It would have been fun to interview you (the offer still stands, by the way) for the final issue of my other zine, *FUCK(tm)*, but my fax software seems to be chasing its own tail and I'm not sure my original transmission to you couldn't have been worded with more clarity and/or panache.

Anyway. I have some reading to do. Then some drawing before my eyes slide over to the clock and it occurs to me that I've once again exceeded the bedtime allotted by my reliable old nine to five. At least the paycheck comes this week. I'm looking forward to *How To Be An Artist* and the collected *Form and Void*.

Break a leg,
Ray Earles

1) *I'm sure that your karmic debt is in the distant past now in more ways than you, yourself, would care to enumerate. I can only hope that this late publication of your undated letter provides for you a level of retrospective contentment that would have been beyond your capabilities to perceive at the time of the events you document. If, however, its publication causes you to attain to any state to the nether side of "rueful" then I have missed my guess and, so, apologize.*

2) *Too true, however Jules Feiffer did entitle one of his strip collections The Explainers. In another eight months or so, I will find out if I am irretrievably a life member of this compulsive constituency or, as I hope, I will discover that it was just a major part of my former job description as the creator of Cerebus. I sincerely hope that it proves to be the latter case.*

I. Am. So. Tired. Of. Explaining

3) *The Watcher is the higher incarnation of the*

Explainer. A bit complicated to go into here, but try this on for size: the Watcher need only perceive accurately, whereas the Explainer tries to explicate accurately. Whether he is explaining things to others or to himself, he is locked within a duality, splitting his own awareness into "Explainer" and "Explainee" or doing the same thing externally with himself in the former role and an audience of whatever size in the latter role. I tried to portray Suentus Po as having a level of bemused self-awareness about himself as he became absorbed in Cerebus' story. Try as he might to merely observe, Cerebus had the same effect on him that he has on everyone: the magnifier. Once he started Explaining, it was like eating salted nuts and even the façade of the Watcher fell away until he was a full participant and, therefore, subject to the karmic forces and repercussions which participation implies. Would Cirin and Cerebus have had their pitched battle no matter what Suentus Po said to them, or did they have their pitched battle, at least partly because of what he said to them, or did they have their pitched battle because of what he failed to say to them? Successive states of being, descending from the passive narrator who has, at least, introduced some overarching ideas in to the proceedings before the inevitable mayhem takes place, to the active participant who contributed in a major or minor fashion to the possibly inevitable/possibly not inevitable mayhem (there is no control group), to the active participant who actively failed and whose failure brought about the mayhem made inevitable by his participation.

Does the Buddha represent the highest state of enlightenment or does scrupulous non-participation represent nothing more than a failure to perceive accurately the need for participation? Do you evade dichotomy by asserting "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him"? Or is it a given that the Buddha—because he is never "on the road"—if he is encountered on the road is a false Buddha? Is the Buddha's non-participation a guarantee of the happiest of all possible outcomes or is the Buddha's non-participation an implicit failure?

For me, all of these issues began with the basic creative problem of how to introduce a genuinely omniscient character into the storyline at the end of Church & State who could enunciate what was, at the time, my own best assessment of my own, at the time, largest worldview (note the self-canceling duality implied. if you are assessing your own largest worldview what you are assessing can't, by implication, be a "largest worldview" since your assessment is external to it), the Judge. Even in a fictitious world omniscience is impossible to portray. It was only later when I read the Bible that I realized that God faced/faces/is facing/will face the same problem in the nearly (to human eyes, anyway) infinite realms inhabited by His creations. What character can He introduce into the world to tell people what's going on, given that this world no doubt differs from God's context about as much as this printed page differs from my physical being? It's one of the reasons that I've found reading scripture aloud to be efficacious

I understand very little of it—my perceptions are tri-dimensional to such an extent that I don't even know how many dimensions there are to reality and I take it as a given that scripture documents people and events which resonate with dimensions beyond my ability to perceive accurately or otherwise—but, I do believe my soul understands scripture implicitly and scripture allows my soul to persevere even as my soul finds itself mired in a hopeless and dramatically degraded circumstance (that is to say, in me). Read the Synoptic Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and try to explain to yourself what it is that he said. "Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." Is this a good thing? Who wants to inherit a finite ball of dust and rock whose core is inhabited by God's adversary? What do you do with it when you inherit it? It is beyond explanation insofar as it has an infinite number of explanations. But read it aloud and your soul is improved by it.

4) In my view (and I really created characters here who are beyond my own ability to describe accurately), both Cirin and Suenteus Po indeed had telepathic contact with Cerebus off-panel, as they would have ongoing telepathic contact with each other. They "contended" for Cerebus in the way that "higher beings" would feel obliged to: by scrupulously avoiding contact with him and leaving it to Cerebus to find them (the process which began in *Mind Game*). My own view is that they were lying to themselves in a very conventional and human fashion even as they used their higher states of being to persuade themselves they were doing nothing of the kind. Suenteus Po, as an example, had most of his followers call themselves Suenteus Po, thus casting the widest possible net of proxy participants and guaranteeing that Cerebus would become aware of him—and himself took the name from a previous Suenteus Po so as to divert responsibility from himself.

One of the best treatments of telepathy (which was very much on my mind in coming up with Cirin and Suenteus Po) was the 1973 movie *Zardoz*, which is worth watching at the very least for that: how telepathic beings would interact (and how squishy-soft, feminine and yet brutally tyrannical such a world would be). There is an interesting borderland between persuasion and information and there are a lot of persuaders who consider themselves mere imparters of information. Much of the Cerebus storyline between issues 20 and 186 was concerned with that.

5) Duly noted.

6) My pleasure I assure you.

H'lo,

After finally getting around to subscribing to Cerebus 3 months ago, I realized that I couldn't deal with the hypocrisy of reading same and being continually brow-beaten (English for pussy-whipped) by my merged permanence.

Accordingly, my new address is given above (Previous being Flat 4, 39 Brunswick Terrace, Hove,

East Sussex BN3 1HA). Could you please amend?

Last Cerebus that I saw was (I think) issue 6 of *Latter Days*.

Thanks and all.

Easton Brown
Ground Floor Flat,
11 Farm Road,
Hove, East Sussex,
BN3 1DB
UK.

I have a new protocol for these situations which first came to me when Gerhard told me that Eric, the keyboardist in Dirty Shirt had broken up with his wife, Helen. "Tell him 'I'm sorry' or 'congratulations' as the case may be." New manners for a new age, gentlemen.

"Women are like elephants.

I like to look at 'em but I'd hate to own one."

— Will Rogers

24/02/02

Dear Dave

I've decided to write you after being a fan of Cerebus (off and on) for the past ten years or so.

I've thought about commenting on your artwork, and my fondness of it, I thought about commenting on Gerhard's backgrounds, and my fondness of them. I also thought (I love that word) about commenting on your writing, political views and social views but I realized that it would serve no purpose.

I'm sure you'd agree that my being for or against your viewpoints would neither enhance nor diminish your quality of life. I just re-read that last sentence and found that I understand my point but can't make heads nor tails out of the actual combination of words. Oh well.

I guess I just want to say that I really like the work you've done over the past 24 years, 2 months. I've made a commitment to having the previous 299 issues by the time issue 300 ships. After saying that, I think I should explain my opening line. Ten years ago my cousin's fiancé gave me *Church & State* vol. 1 & 2. I loved them and read them repeatedly. I ended up giving the books to a friend of mine for some reason or another. Last January (2001) I decided to take on the 300-issue challenge but also get the books so I knew what was going on in the new issues.

Are you and Gerhard planning something big for March 2004 (aside issue 300)?

"The history of women is the history of the worst form of tyranny the world has ever known – the tyranny of the weak over the strong. It is the only tyranny that lasts!!"

— Oscar Wilde

Might I make a suggestion or two? I may? Okay. How about some nice hardbound volumes of *Cerebus*? Each story could have its own book and the in-between issues (as well as *Swords of Cerebus* backup stories) could be added for posterity. How about a limited edition comic longbox (300 count) with a "Cerebus over the years" design on it for retailers who order a complete series of the graphic novels (I hate the term phone-book)? It could be sold to or given away to those of us who own (or will own) the complete 300-issue run.

Just some things to think about.

Regards,
Kevin Mills
90 Emerson Way
Newmarket, Ontario
L3Y 7M7
thespythatshagsu@rogers.com

PS: If you decide to print this letter in a future Aardvark Comment I'd like to ask other *Cerebus* readers for help in tracking down issues from the first book (#1-25). They can contact me at the address and e-mail address above. If you don't print this can you at least put my contact info in an issue and a note saying that I'm looking for early issues?

P.P.S: If this letter seems disjointed and nonsensical, I'm sorry. I wrote this while watching *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me*.

I haven't got anything planned for March, 2004. I don't know about Ger, you'd have to ask him. In all the interviews he just says, "A long nap."

As to hardbound volumes, it is certainly something we get asked about a lot, but as it stands right now for a company our size keeping 14—soon to be 16—trade paperbacks in print is enough of a headache. I mean, it really is. I think most people read that and think I'm being coy or something, but think about it: if any one of the books goes out of print or is unavailable in the stores, the odds evaporate of anyone starting to pick up the series. All those books being in print is, literally, our financial life's blood. Costs about \$24,000 to put one of them back into print and about two years to recoup the investment

Put it this way, I know you all mean well when you recommend it, but what you're actually doing is saying: "Say! See those two guys over there juggling fourteen machetes? Somebody throw them a live chainsaw and let's see what happens!"

April 4, 2002

Dave Dave Dave...

I beat you to the punch. dude! In regards to your Spawn parody, Spore, I did my own Spawn parody of the same name ten years ago. The name "Spore" is

probably the most obvious name to use so I figured that it would only be a matter of time when someone else decided to use it on the Toddster's creation. If memory serves you were doing a Sandman parody at the time when me and a few buds did our own Spore comic story

I've enclosed a reprint comic of the first appearance of the character and a photocopy of his solo story which I did that appeared in a subsequent issue (both issues, I believe, were sent to you years ago but that was during the boom days of the early 90's and I'd wager that you were so inundated with small press comics back then and probably never got around to reading them all (mine included). The reproductions are crappy and muddy looking which is not the way the original artwork looks. Some day I'll reproduce them the way they should look

So here ya go. Hope you like them. They really aren't bad amateur work if I do say so myself.

I do plan to do another story or two with my Spore character. So please don't sue me if I publish it. I'm not rich and, after all, I was there first. I'm sure there's room in comicdom for both parodies with the same name.

Best
Andrew Debly
254 Lynhaven Ct.
Fredericton, NB
E3B 2V6

Hey, wicked cool, dude! Did you send your parody to Todd? I did and I didn't get anything Not even a free "Todd-as-the-bum-in-the-alley" action figure. Or even a letter from his wife, Wanda, who is like this total babe, eh? Maybe we should do Spore action figures and see if that gets a reaction out of the Toddmeister. Not!

11-30-02

Dear Dave,

It's been a while since I've mailed a letter, though I seem to write one after reading every issue. Please excuse the detritus at left; this is being written in a schoolboy's notebook. I've been a teacher, now, for some time and one accumulates leftovers.

That above is as good a segue as any to my response to part two of "Why Canada Slept".

First of all, please accept my reciprocal remarks herein as a respectful response (and alliterative allocution) to your desire to "clear the air" north to south: I'd like to respond south to north, as I feel you could take some instruction as well.

Your remarks, in relating Dieppe & Vimy to the Alamo and Valley Forge, etc. are well-taken and well-founded. But, understand this; I am roughly your age and I find that most people our age can't tell us today the significance of the Alamo or Valley Forge including (without the help of aides) Mr. Rumsfeld

History is, increasingly, the dying art of America. (I

write it as "art", because it is not a science unless it is archeology or anthropology - and the latter is a very suspect "science"). I am a teacher (both secondary and post-secondary), but I am a political conservative (as you know). Therefore, I can write, without equanimity, that I believe that America is doing its best to kill off true history.

The only difference between what you write about Canada & what I believe about America, is that (I believe) Canadians do what you accuse them of primarily out of some sort of national (subconscious) sense of inferiority; while Americans do what I accuse us of out of a (more conscious) sense of "who cares about back then; I've got mine." But, having said that; liberalism is liberalism, no matter where you are. Same horse, whether he's got a maple leaf on his arse or a stripes & stars on his ass.

Thank you for your continued good will (both of us, you and I, seem to be much more civil in our middle years) & for: "proud and sterling history".

Dave, I *am* proud to be an American. I hope that you can retain some measure of pride in being Canadian. You have a beautiful, expansive, expensive country. I know that; as the publisher, writer, creator, artist, printer, etc. of "Cerebus", you have become sort of a dual citizen. And I know that it is clear that you love us, Americans, in spite of us. Thanks!

But, know this. Everywhere that I have lived in America (and you know I get around), I have *always* found that Americans love Canada and Canadians. We politic with Mexico; we trade through NAFTA with both sides, but we *love* Canada.

What's not to love?!? Beautiful country, *very* few snooty pseudo-French, a pretty good sports trade-off (especially the Expo's Farm Team), and (according to you) an army whose butt we can kick at-will. Plus, the Trans-Alaska Highway!

Seriously: It's not as bad, from our point of view, as you think. Oh, don't stop the essay. And thanks for your insight. But, hey... it's OK.

But really? We sort of already resigned ourselves to it. All of it. Don't really wanna have to; but, there you go.

Thanks, Dave.

Yours after 300,
Jeff Seiler

P.S. Not that we're *always* arrogant about it.

P.P.S. Although, sometimes it seems that Canada (and, really, only Canadians like you) are the only ones who get *that*.

P.P.P.S. Well, actually; ran out. But it's sort of a tradition for me to do this... See ya in 2004.

Thanks for the reaction, as always. Easily every tenth letter in my stack of Aardvark Comment candidates is from you, Jeff. I want you to know that that isn't intentional on my part. I intentionally ignore the names

at the end of the letters so that, as much as possible, the letters get chosen because the person had something interesting to say, something I was interested in discussing. I have no idea until I sit down to answer them in a bunch that I've "pulled" that many from one guy.

I've had an insight recently that may prove to be the process of "political natural selection" which will favour conservatism over liberalism: conservatives pass on a specific viewpoint of the world, a series of facts. Valley Forge was heroic and worthwhile, the Alamo was heroic and worthwhile. A conservative American knows he owes those guys big time for the sacrifices they made, knows that he owes the framers of the Constitution for their diligence, their knowledge of history, their determination not to let the European and Eurasian failures repeat themselves on this continent. New mistakes? Fine. I'm sure they took it as a given. But let's not repeat the old failures.

By contrast, what can liberalism pass on to the next generation of liberal? Liberalism has eroded to the point where it is unable to draw distinctions of any kind. What do you teach your kid? Everyone is the same but we're all different and this is a good thing, pass it on. There are no good guys or bad guys, just different ways of being good, pass it on. Columbus didn't discover America, America was already here. Columbus was just an enabler for a bunch of people who were being good in a bad way and who didn't respect other people's lifestyle choices who were being good in a good way, but we know better now, pass it on. Know what I mean? Conservatism wins by default and everyone else can just wait for the next incarnation of Survivor.

* * * * *

Dave

Getting my usual good value for money read from *Cerebus* these days, currently as a result of the back up articles rather than the strip frankly (which is a shame) nothing wrong with it, just as the the world's most committed atheist, I find trawling through endless pages of scriptural analysis a bit too draining. Enjoyed 'Islam my Islam' though (though again, I 'skipped' the Mohammedian bits, but got stuck into the 'relevant' stuff on Palestine, (or 'Palestine') and Yassir Arafat etc. "Why Canada Slept" is shaping up pretty good too, though I'm going to dash off some fairly unconsidered knee jerk reactions to some of your points that I disagree with. So I'm just going to write what I 'feel', on a purely gut level.

I don't think it's arrogance or anything, but I really don't personally consider putting myself forward as 'cannon fodder' for the 'great American campaign', 'The War Against Terrorism' (or TWAT, as I like to call it). I just think I've got better things to do. Perhaps I'm selfish, but an *enormous* amount of things about the world strike me as, quite frankly, mad, and the only sensible recourse is to retreat as far away from them as possible, rather than just 'join in'. You'll probably colour me a 'coward', and if it comes down to not laying down

my life for a cause I don't believe in, then I guess you'd be right.

I'd like to look at some of your assertions as to why we should all serve 'allegiance' to the States here too. (I'm writing this purely off the cuff from memory, so if I'm getting any of your points utterly wrong, then I apologise, but hey, it's only a letter) America was *enormously* reluctant to enter World War One. By the time she did, the Germans were severely depleted and war weary. It's possible to argue the contention that 'the yanks came in late, made a lot of noise, and took all the credit', which I've heard postulated.

After the war, America deliberately repudiated the League of Nations, and had 'no interest in European affairs', a policy which directly led to the undermining of any power the league might have had, which *forced* appeasement, which, by the way, America did nothing about either, as it was 'none of their business' (So I'm supposed to care about *their* business?) Woodrow Wilson, a good man and great leader went on record as saying 'If America does not join the League, I can predict with absolute certainty that within a generation there will be another war.' One of those occasions whereby there is no satisfaction whatsoever to be gleaned from being 100% correct.

So, not a lot to be 'thankful' for so far.

World War Two then, according to the American President himself, a direct result of *American* indolence. America's response? Sluggish again to say the least. In fact, American history books go on record as saying the war *started* in 1941, not that they *entered* it then. Two years late again, which does kind of make me wonder why you presume that everyone should fall in as soon as they holler 'march!' It could equally be argued, as I've heard again, that they 'spent the next 3 years over here fucking our women while they let all the Russian's do the real work and then (this sounds familiar), coming in late, making a lot of noise and taking all the credit (again). Some statistics bear this out somewhat. Around 400,000 American casualties, compared to some 30,000,000 Russian losses, and about 250,000 illegitimate births in England fathered by absent American G.I.'s. But hey, that wouldn't make a very good film would it? Like *Memphis Belle*, or *U-571*, or *Enigma* or the *Great Escape*, or all those myriad other events that the American played no part in at all, except in Hollywood.

I'm not meaning here to denigrate the American part that *was* played in these conflicts, or the heroes who lost their lives in the defence of freedom, just trying to add a bit of perspective.

In the wake of the War, America prolonged a needless and non-existent 'cold war' against the Russians (remember, the guys that *actually* whipped Hitler), because of some 'ideological' difference. This 'cold war' had a hideous impact on Europe but, hey, that's not 'their problem' is it?

On to the modern day. America has employed a rampantly 'interventionist' policy, funding Latin American drug tsars to 'undermine' Central American regimes they disagree with, supplying Al'Qaeda to aid

the Afghan's against those damn Commies', and it keeps on going off in their faces doesn't it? The drug barons get powerful so flood the States with their produce. Al'Qaeda get rid of the Russians, and we know what they did next. Don't get me wrong, 9-11, despicable beyond belief, and yeah, it needs to be avenged, but the reasons for it go back quite a ways, and frankly 'it's not my problem.' I'm not by the by, in any way implying that America's got 'what it deserved', just to make myself absolutely clear.

I hope they get them, but I'm not playing. Guess I come from the 'why can't everybody just be friends school.' I mean, I'm Irish, I could have taken 'the British killed two *million* of my people last century and continue to govern and persecute them, so I'm out for revenge', but with life, you've got to move forwards, not backwards. I'm a history teacher, and the most important lesson you can learn from the past is that that's where it belongs. Yeah some people need a slap, and if we run out of willing volunteers, then maybe I'll sign up, until then, I guess I just don't care. Humanity's problems aren't *my* problems. If people want to carry on fighting for whatever they think is a good reason, then they will, personally I don't see the point, so I'm not going to play. I've just got better things to do.

Like I say, just a few random, immediate 'thoughts'. All I will ask is, if you ever consider actually *printing* this ramble, please don't print my address. There's a lot of nutters out there you know. Dave, you argue your points superbly, and I know you're going to give me a lot more to think about before 'While Canada Slept' is over. Along for the ride.

Best,
Finbarr

I can agree with you insofar as I can see that there is a "whatever goes around, comes around" quality to the United States having first-hand experience, after 11 September, with what it must've been like for the rest of the world in the conflicts that you mentioned to have to wait for the United States to "muck in". And I have tried to convince myself on several occasions since 11 September that it is just a matter of the "shoe being on the other foot" and that, by the end of this year, or the middle of next year, the War on Terrorism—like the mid-twentieth century war on fascism—will become a universal international concern...

(I think the Australians "get it" with their action in the Solomon Islands. I think Britain "got it" but we'll have to wait for the Conservatives to be elected before they "get it" again. Apart from that, all I see is the UN getting in America's way on Iraq—and then insisting that they do something in Liberia! "We don't disagree with what you're doing, but we only want you doing it where we tell you to do it." What sort of political theory is that? No, I think the Americans have a very sensible political theory that they are acting on. Let's get rid of the worst guys, the dictators for whom there is no excuse, no sensible reason for their continued existence. Let's start with the ones who harbour and finance ter-

rorism. Let's start with the ones we think pose the greatest threat to the American people, bearing 11 September in mind.

I can't fault that thinking in the least

I would love to have the 101st Airborne take out Robert Mugabe, but Zimbabwe is not a top-of-the-list American problem. Iraq is. Iran might be. Syria might be. Iran and Syria are, clearly, mulling things over while they see how Iraq turns out. It'll be a while until America has time for the Robert Mugabes of this world. Again, I can't fault that thinking in the least. I think Australia, Canada and Britain can and should get rid of Mugabe as the Commonwealth's indisputable "Worst Guy". I think Australia sensibly saw that the Solomon Islands situation was closer to hand and Tony Blair's squishy Marxist government—not Tony Blair himself, but his government—and Canada's squishy Marxist government aren't about to do anything. So, the Commonwealth brings shame on itself. So what else is new? We'll just have to wait for the Americans and in the meantime watch Africa's former breadbasket nation erode into just another African Marxist basket case)

...but I think you severely misstate the case when you say that "the yanks came in late, made a lot of noise, and took all the credit". No question that they did not lose nearly as many lives as the Russians did—and had virtually no civilian casualties as opposed to the millions of Russians who died. If you want to go by casualty figures, there is no question that it shouldn't be called World War II, but the Great Patriotic War because that was what the Russians called it and they suffered the greatest number of losses. A more accurate perception is; the great democracies did their share in the Russians' Great Patriotic War

But, come on, Finbarr—American technology and "know-how," its ability to turn its industrial base to generating world-class munitions and to develop the first nuclear bomb from scratch—I think that's always been underrated even as the divide between American and all other countries in those very areas has widened to a quantum level. What might have been a source of debate in 1953 becomes, to me, in 2003 unmistakable evidence of profound denial on the part of all other nations if they're still trying to hold to the view that "the yanks come in late, make a lot of noise and take all the credit." The Yanks tilted the scales in the last century. Decisively. And repeatedly.

Militant Islam will still be a going concern in the world many, many years from now. Arguably, the United States is all that stands between us and worldwide Muslim terrorism. The number of conflicts in the world that are between Muslim countries or between Muslim and non-Muslim countries as compared to the number of conflicts where no Muslims are involved, again, I think, takes that out of the realm of debate and into the realm of the inescapably factual. The only questions to me, are 1) Can the United States—alone—tilt the scales in the War on Terrorism? 2) Is it conscionable to make the United States tilt those scales alone since we will all be affected if they can't? 3) How long are we just going to sit and watch before we realize that sitting and watch-

ing is an untenable, unethical position when "your team" is being threatened. If the Yanks were wrong not to enter World War II until 1941, at what point were they wrong not to do so? September 1939? June, 1940? And, in the War on Terrorism, at what point are we, the non-American nations, wrong not to make a whole-hearted contribution? January 2002? March, 2003? December, 2004?

No, I wouldn't call you a coward, Finbarr. I think you've arrived at your conclusions through your own thought processes and in good conscience. I just don't agree with your processes or your conclusions. Ultimately, I think that you won't either, assuming the War on Terrorism continues and it becomes obvious that there's a lot of heavy lifting to be done.

10.09 99

Dear Dave Sim

I thought you might like to know this. In the New Testament, written originally in Greek, the word used most often to translate into the English "love" is Agapè

When we read that God is "love", when we read that God "loved" the world so much, that he sent his only begotten son for our sakes, and when we read Jesus saying that we must "love" our neighbour as he "loved" us (which is by the way, Jesus' modified/better version of the Old Testament Golden Rule to love thy neighbour as thyself) the word Agapè is being used.

The interesting thing is that this type of love has nothing what-so-ever to do with emotion. Agapè is love based solely on reason, God doesn't love because it makes him feel good, he loves because he thinks/knows it is right to do so. God doesn't want us to emotionally love but to love with our power of reason.

I think that the scripture that says "God is (reason based) love" is a definite proof that He, is a he, and not an it, or even a she as some blasphemously presume to claim.

Keep up your fine work on your fine comic. I am really enjoying "Fall and the River".

Billy Beach

Thanks. This should give everyone a rough idea of how far back some of these letters go. You're going to have a lot of squishy Christians on your case about your interpretation of Agapè, but I quite agree with you and I thank you for pointing it out.

07.07.01

Dave

This letter has been floating around in my head for years. Now, a few days after issue 267 went on sale, I am finally writing it. I'll start by introducing my self. My name, as it says on the return address is Jason Wade. I am 24 years old (born January of '77). I just finished my fifth year of college at Georgia State University and

have completed all the classes necessary to receive a Bachelor Arts degree in Film and Video. To celebrate that occasion, my friends and I partied last night after which I read the first half of *Rick's Story*. I fell asleep and when I woke up, I finished it off. I'll get to my thoughts about it shortly. First I want to put down on paper my past history in terms of the comic books I have grown up reading.

I began reading series such as *Transformers* and *Star Wars*. That starting point would have been when I was about ten years old. I moved on to reading superhero books (primarily Marvel) and became the worst kind of fan boy. I began buying titles because the propaganda said they were hot or, alternatively, cool, or someday they would be worth a lot of money. During this period, I was also buying books I would find at flea markets (do they have flea markets up north there?), including numerous independent books, of which I knew nothing. Among those books were some issues of the *Biweeklies* and *Church and State*. I looked through them, but could not understand what was going on. I remember looking at the letter column of what was probably *Church and State*, actually I now recall that it was an issue where the letters were debating the "rape" of Astoria. I looked and read and realized this was a series which was too deep for me.

I started high school in a new city and a new state, with a new comic book store too. I forgot to mention that prior to this move, I had received a copy of the *Masters of Comic Book Art* (or some similar title) which was hosted by Harlan Ellison and which featured you among others. (I now regret that I gave it away to a girlfriend in high school.) I then had a better grasp on what *Cerebus* was, so when, in this new city (Las Vegas, for the record), I saw the newest issue of *Cerebus* on the shelf and it was the beginning of a new story line titled *Guys*. I bought it, read it and loved it. I bought the second and maybe the third issues. (One other sidenote. I had previously bought #0 when it came out and being a Marx brothers fan had loved Lord Julius.) Then, for whatever reason, I stopped going to the comic book store regularly. I stopped buying *Cerebus*.

Years passed and I moved back to the city where I was born, Decatur, a suburb of Atlanta. I did not start buying comic books regularly again until, I guess spring of '98. One day I found the first "phonebook" and long after, purchased the first issue of *Going Home*. I also ordered a signed and numbered copy of *Rick's Story* (#297). I have been a regular reader ever since. I have also gone back and bought individual issues as I can afford it, primarily for the covers and the letters. That brings us up to the present where two of my most prized possessions, literaturewise, are first editions of volumes one (#183) and two (#160) of *Going Home*, the story-line with the second greatest influence on me to date.

Reads, at the time that I first read it, had a significant influence on me. My eyes and my mind were opened wider than they had been and my lifelong romantic and feminist views were shattered. I had never thought reasonably about the whole collection of liberal opinions which I considered to be my personal phi-

losophy. I also began to actually think about art. My current views are now under near constant scrutiny and, as needed, reformulating. (A near total lack of sleep—owing to the aforementioned party—is beginning to affect my focus, but I know that if I do not finish this letter now, I may not finish it.)

Rick's Story. I missed a lot of the details on previous readings. For instance, I had never understood Rick's words when he is breaking the branch. This morning I realized the connection to the last scene in the bar.

I'm really finding it difficult to put my thoughts into words and so will start wrapping up this letter. In brief, I now appreciate *Rick's Story* much more. Expect another letter with more thoughts on the story and related topics. Thank you, Dave and Gerhard, for awakening an interest in authors (such as Wilde and Fitzgerald) who I might have never read, and for making me a better man and artist and writer. I plan to see you both in Chicago next month as I will be driving up there for the signing (partly just to get out of town for a week). Keep working hard, guys.

Jason Wade

P.S. This was typed on a circa 1920s Corona Four typewriter.

P.P.S. I thought I had found a girl who was more reasonable than emotional. At present, I am still believing 5 impossible things before breakfast.

It really was the most amazing letter, typed on onion skin paper so that a number of the o's were punched right through.

It would be interesting, Jason, to find out how many Impossible Things Before Breakfast you're believing two years later on.

Sim

This letter has been a long time coming. Years, I suppose. Every time I read one of your stories I get the impulse to write you and yell and scream and rant and cackle. But then I calm down and think better of it. I think about all the other lunatics that must do the same. And if my rantings are just part of a sea of rantings... well then they just don't seem to mean quite so much anymore.

But now the time has come, and not because I have anything original to say about your work. No, now because I have taken your god-damned advice. I have seen fit to start self-publishing. And you being the God of Self-Publishing (snicker) I felt I must leave an appropriate offering on the altar or be cursed to fail.

Actually, I think a thank you is in order. This must seem sick to you on your high throne, but I probably wouldn't have done this if it weren't for you. That is not to say I did this for you. No, I did this for myself, but you offered a coherent and thoughtful example to follow, a little light to guide me down the path. (Jeez, if this

guy did it, I can do it!)

There were really two external factors that inspired me to go the distance for this project: your *Guide to Self-Publishing* and Johnny Cash's song *Folsom Prison Blues* (live). Your guide because you clearly state that one will never know unless one tries and one will never be any good unless one keeps trying. Something that every writer/artist knows in the back of their head, but it is good to firmly reminded every so often. *Folsom Prison Blues* because the damned song became a fucking metaphor for my life. I was stuck in a creative Folsom Prison. Well, I still am, but now at least I send dispatches from my cell.

Enclosed are the first two issues of my self-published magazine, *New York Fucking City*. It is a collection of fiction and stuff from myself and my circle of friends. No great work, really. But an effort. An effort to keep working on my shit every day.

In a way these two issues are also a direct response (a fuck you, as it were) to a point you make in your *Guide to Self-Publishing* about writers vs. artists. You talk about how hard it is for writers to self-publish. Now, admittedly you are talking about comics, but I think your point is misguided. In fact, I think it is easier for writers to self-publish. If a writer has a comic in their head they can't draw it or storyboard it, but they can write it out in simple prose. And that prose, in turn, is damned easy to self-publish and get out there.

A second fuck you: I work for my money. I suffer no illusions that my creative endeavors will ever make money. So I keep a steady, well-paying job so I can pay for my projects. It is hard, but it is doable. It just takes a little discipline. I envy your position—you earn your living doing what you love. Just remember that there are alternatives, that require just as much, if not more, discipline and dedication to the art.

And I do have one question/comment about your work. *Reads* was vitriolic. *Reads* was, alternately, a travesty and genius. But something you said in the *Guide to Self-Publishing* made me look at it in a new light. You talked about your "campaign" and how you had to play propaganda and stick unflinchingly to one side of your argument to make a point. This made me see *Reads* and *Mothers* [sic] in a different light. Rather than taking them at face value—a rant about the hateful female conspiracy by dave sim—I thought perhaps they might have been an extreme metaphoric example. By showing the ludicrous concept of a female conspiracy to keep men down you simultaneously show the equally ludicrous concept of a male conspiracy to keep women down. A phenomenon which is a fact of life these days, right? I am probably way off-base with this. But who knows? I was just thinking.

Anyway. Thanks again. Thank you for all your hard work. Like it or not you are an inspiration to many, myself included.

Sincerely
luke
nyc

Nice theory but, uh, no. I probably over-emphasize the anti-feminism but only because I'm the only one willing to publicly be an anti-feminist and because I'm the only one with a vehicle that can't (so far, anyway) be suppressed. But I really do think feminism is a major problem. A lot of guys agree with me privately (like, over the phone) but they're too afraid of women to go public, which they admit.

And I accept your "fuck you". The two issues of *New York Fucking City* you sent were interesting and beautifully produced.

* * * * *

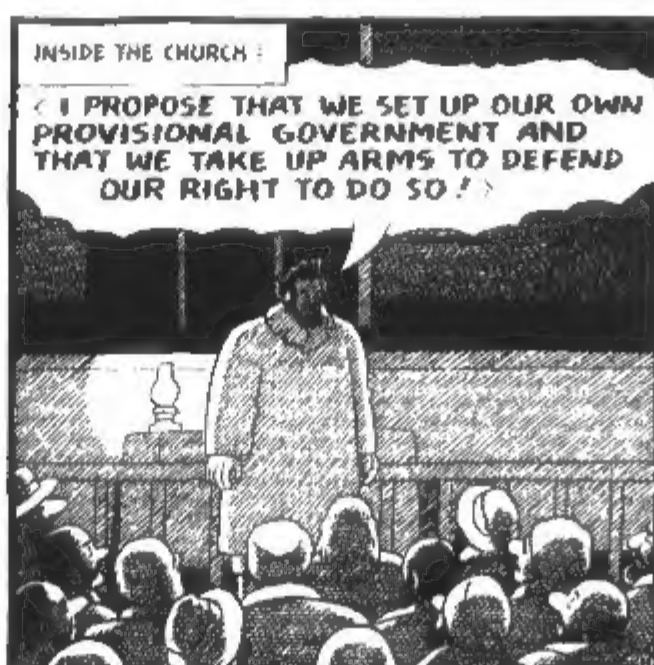
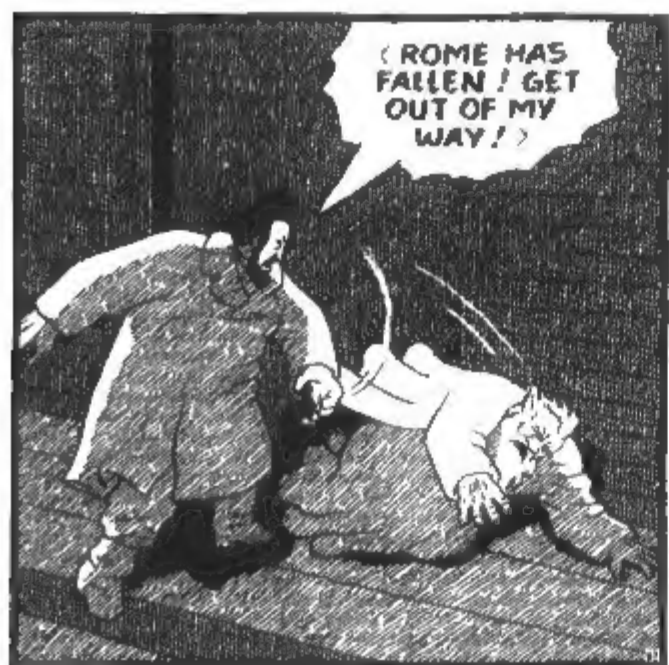
14 Aug 2001

Mr. Sim,

I want to thank you for all the years of enjoyment I have gotten from reading *Cerebus The Aardvark*. I started collecting *Cerebus* sometime in 90/91 when I lived in San Francisco. Since I came in so late, I had to get the phone book collections to catch up on the storyline. At that time collection books weren't as numerous as they are now, so *Cerebus* was special. I got out of collecting comics about six or seven years ago for many reasons (none of which includes *Cerebus*) and I stopped reading *Cerebus*. Just last month I got back into it and *Cerebus* was the second book I had to buy, but I was out for so long that I had to buy the giant size *Cerebus* to catch up again. Needless to say that I am still reading and not fully caught up yet. Which to me is just fine. One thing I have noticed and I don't know if any other fan has written to you about this but you have never reproduced any of the letter pages or your wonderful printed editorials in the back of each of the regular books. There are now at this writing 267 or so books and the new fans are probably like me (hopefully) wondering if you are ever going to put all of your printed word out. It would be great to read now from the beginning and seeing the progression of the fans and your insight to story arcs and how they came about. Please let me know when you are going to put that collection out. Also to the other fans, *SEND IN YOUR LETTERS* letting them know that you would buy that collection also.

Thank you for your time,
Anthony S. Marinelli
Upland, Ca

Actually, we did reprint all of Deni's "Notes from the Publisher" and my "Notes from the President" and the letters pages to the first eighty-one issues in the *Bi-weeklies* (1988 to 1990). I kind of like the fact that those fans who actually own the original comic books have something no one else has. Likewise with the covers and the back cover photos. Right now, we are very much up to our eyeballs just with keeping the stories in print and trying to finish on schedule in March, 2004. After that we'll have to see what seems to "need doing."



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